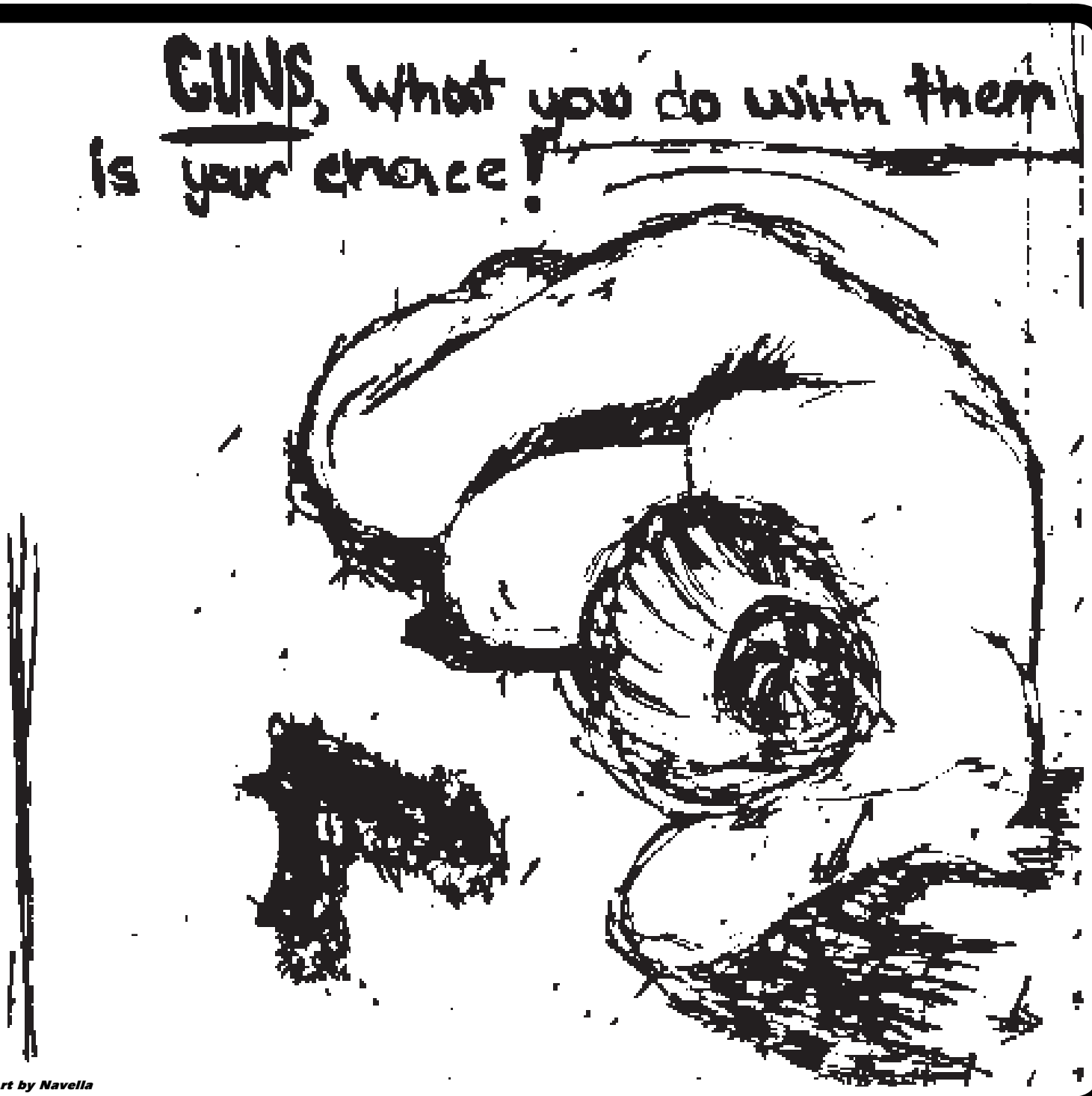

Art by Navella

It's a shame. it's been like this for years
Too many mothers sheddin' bloody tears
Guns took the lives of too many young souls
It's ballistic what lead could do when it's cold

read the rest Zodiac's POW on page 4

EDITOR'S NOTE: VOLUME 12.17/18

Welcome to the latest double issue of The Beat Within. The following editorial note you are about to read is a collaborative effort. With that said, allow me to start by proclaiming, a new day has come for The Beat Within publication and the program in general!

Like it or not, this week's paper that you have in your hands is truly a work in progress as we maintain and find new ways for The Beat Within publication and

workshops to continue at the level all of us have come to expect, while at the same time cutting back, and scrambling and hustling to seek financial support from the respected counties we enter weekly, and beyond.

Of course, we will keep you Beat readers abreast of our work, the good and the bad. No secrets here. No one ever said this work would be easy, and definitely we Beaters, as many of you call us, love a good challenge!

What's different about this issue? Well, this is the first week we have several contributions from "The Land of Enchantment" in our pages. We welcome the new voices from Bernalillo County in New Mexico. This is their first effort, and it's made possible by the very supportive probation department and the juvenile court, particularly, Steve Serna who has been running these initial workshops with great success. We have been in constant communication with our new friend, answering his questions and providing him with a how-to breakdown of our program/workshops too.

We also welcome back, after a number of years of having their own Beat publication, the young writers from Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall. These youngsters are writers to reckon with too. We can't hate here, but in many Beat facilitators' eyes, the best writing comes out of this juvenile hall facility too. (We hope some of their extraordinary contributions will inspire some of the rest of our writers to step up big.)

You wonder what it took to get them back in The "big" Beat publication? Simply us asking. Mr James Hill, our contact, has been very supportive of the program too. We informed him that one way for us to save time and money was to cut the Santa Clara edition and include their voices in the regular edition, and so we have it! We warmly welcome back the Santa Clara writers.

What else is new with this issue? Well, we no longer have regular weekly writings included in this issue. We strictly have POW (Pieces Of the Week) Co-POWs, and standouts, segueing right into the BWO (Beat WithOuts). We will no longer put in meaningless pieces, one or two-sentence pieces that teach nothing. We will no longer include numerous love poems by one poet. We won't put in ridiculous rants about how great one person is. Also, if someone gives us numerous pieces they will only see a couple in each issue, with the rest to follow in future issues. We know for some, all of this is going to be hard to follow and understand, given so many of you have grown up knowing The Beat Within as one-way. Well... a new era has begun!

Of course, nothing we have implemented is in stone. We are a work in progress, determined to make the best product possible, given our resources. With that said, we appreciate your patience as we fine tune our priceless product. Thank you Beat readers and writers for taking part in this amazing and challenging ride. Now, allow this editor once again to introduce my dear friend, Will Roy, who most likely will touch on many of the same points, yet have his own take. Take it away, Will!

We all reach a point in our lives where curses become blessings in disguise. The Beat Within is arriving at this point, and although our recent budget cuts have caused us to worry a little bit, we can't help but rejoice in the positive outcomes. First of all, Santa Clara County and New Mexico have been added to The "big" Beat. As stated, we are also cutting all "weekly writings" from The Beat, so that means that anything less than a Standout won't get in. Although this will probably cut a lot of writers who don't take our workshops seriously, it will also raise the bar for Beat writing.

Personally, I feel both discouraged and excited about this recent turn of events. I'm discouraged because no matter where we go to speak, people are always blown away by what we have to say. Yet, when it comes to following through, people are nowhere to be found. We see many of the same faces at community events. It's like we're preaching to the choir most of the time, but yet and still, people are blown away by everything that's being written by you wonderful workshop participants. However, we don't get the credibility — or the resources — we deserve.

On the other hand, I'm excited by this recent turn of events because I feel like things need to change in order to prosper, but when the change is forced, the luxury of change can get lost. We have to change or else we won't survive. We're being forced to change, but in doing so, we're also challenged to explore avenues in our thinking that we wouldn't have, and so this is good for us. The core people at The Beat, who work tremendously hard to put this in your hands — the ones who work so passionately that they can't help but take their work home with them emotionally — will be tested heavily in the coming months. But most of us have survived more troublesome experiences than this one. We'll be all right!

Speaking of survivors let me hand you readers over to my brother, Perry. He's a true survivor with an incredibly insightful perspective...

I think that the best way for me to share this perspective is by going beyond my body in order to reflect and put myself in the shoes of those who The Beat Within represents overall — you writers. Better yet, instead of putting myself in your shoes, I'd rather take some steps back into time when I was just into my teen years, sitting in SF/YGC, in the max unit (B5), facing charges that pretty much had my life on the line.

I choose to go back to this period because this is around the time my dear friend David Inocencio followed his heart and took it upon himself to plant the seeds for The Beat Within, challenging a reality that was dark and without a way for light to shine through. I know when I say this I'm not speaking for myself, but when The Beat Within first came about back in 1996, everybody who was in the max unit found it hard to believe that we would actually be given the opportunity to shine through the darkness so the world could see things our way, and so that our stories could be told and represented by us, or by someone like David who we knew had our best interest at heart.

Prior to The Beat Within, there was no way for detainees to reach out and touch or be touched by the community, nor was there a way for kids to take ownership of their own lives. (That's why I find it frustrating to know that there are those who just sit around in the halls taking The Beat — and all the time put into its making — for granted.)

On the other hand, I can't stand to see these "people" who say that they love the youth so much and speak of "youth empowerment" yet and still, now that the youth empowerment is at stake, fail to act! There are only a handful of advocates who are willing to stand up in the way that counts most at this point to insure that the "Youth Voice" aka The Beat Within is and will remain a priority in piecing together these incredible stories of social flaws that, after all, usually fall on the heads and hearts of the youth.

On the other, I'm not going to let these changes change me, or the direction that The Beat is headed towards because I'm sure that that there are those who take the purpose of The Beat Within seriously. And for what it's worth, at this very point in time, I'm happy here in the office alongside my colleagues at The Beat Within who are here on point pushing this issue to the limit!!

With all of this in consideration, I must send out much love and respect to those of you Beat writers who are driven to be heard in order to teach and learn from your own unique life experiences. The same goes out to all supporters whose hearts beat for The Beat Within and its purpose.

All right, the two weeks of topics, which given the space are condensed in this issue. The first is, "What Do You Regret Doing Or Not Doing?" — This week we would love to know what's that one thing you regret doing or not doing.

The second topic, "Chased" - We want you writers to describe in detail a time you've been chased. Take us on a journey through your neighborhood streets, the backstreets, the hopping of fences, the back yards, the dangerous high speed chase, and/or into the makeshift hideouts, because you knew you couldn't stop running. So take us on this chase and tell us if you got away or were caught.

Our third topic, "That OG Or Homie Who's Made It Out Of The 'hood" – Do you know any former gangsters who have decided to turn their lives around by going back to school because that's where their future lies, or working a 9 to 5 job rather than take another chance with the law? Have you ever been inspired by this kind of success story? How has it changed your thinking?

Lastly, "The Love That Never Dies..."

For 12.18, the topic, "Guns" - The worst shooting rampage in American history. A young college student at Virginia Tech (Polytechnic), a university in Virginia, shot and killed thirty-two fellow students and then killed himself. Do you think we need to change our laws about guns? Are they too easy to get? How easy are they to get? How expensive? Some people argue that the problem is that it is also far too easy to get semi-automatic weapons, the kinds that are usually for much more than self-defense. Do you think guns make us more violent? Do you remember the first time you saw a gun? Where were you? Who were you with?

The second topic, "To grieve" – We want to know is, who helped you go through your grief when you first experienced your loss? At Virginia Tech, for example, there are "grief counselors" professional mental health workers who are trying to help the survivors deal with their tragedies. In many high schools, counselors come in to talk to the students after a suicide or a death of their peers. Have any of you ever had someone like this come talk to you? And if not – who became your "grief counselor?" A friend? Your family? Yourself? Tell us a story of your grieving process and what worked and what didn't. We want to know what did you do/are doing to help you overcome these hard times.

Lastly, the difficult topic, "Is It Possible To Teach Peace Through Violence?" We've spoken about the horrifying event at Virginia Tech, we hear your stories of all the violence that goes on in your communities, and we've also discussed ways people grieve, so through all of this violence, are there any lessons of peace? Is it possible to teach peace through violence? If so, what peaceful lessons are to be learned about the homie/family member who just got murdered or any other act of violence you've experienced? Do you believe there is something to be learned about all this violence that's going on that can offer peace? If so, what is it? And how do we teach it?

With all this said, lets give a big shout out to this week's POW winners that can be found on pages 4-10.

Ok, this issue goes out to The Beat Within and all of you who make it what it is, and all of you that it has touched.

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At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our commuities already–we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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PIECES OF THE WEEK

Marlon And God

(Verse One)
When you look into my eyes, tell me what you see
Do you see a young thug needin' G-O-D
Tell me, please, cleanse, heal and save my soul
Representin' God is my number one goal
Answer my prayers, God tell me 'bout the mysteries
Do they treat me like the cause of my history
I'll tell you what I think about in my jail cell
If I'ma go to heaven or rot in hell
I think about the cold nights
And lonely days
I think about God's height and His praise
The resentful days, that I would never be saved
And when I get this feelin', to God I pray
(Chorus 2x)
Now, if you got God
And if you got me
It's nothin' but happiness
Bye-bye misery
(Verse 2)
It says it in Your scripture: "Thou shall not steal"
But I did it befo', and then I almost killed
I think about the bad things that I did
The hateful things, but I was only a kid
A little boy trapped inside a demon
My mother was there, but my daddy was leavin'
It's been forty-five days since I last was out
When I came in here, that's when I started to sprout
I got Jesus by my side tryin' to help me fight the devil
Throw away my sin and put me on the right level
Listen to my word, this is a Jesus piece
Pay attention to God, and let the devil release
(Chorus 2x)
Now, if you got God
And if you got me
It's nothin' but happiness
Bye-bye, misery

-Marlon, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is a terrific rap in at least two ways: the flo and the message! You've got skills! But here's our question: did you give yourself to God only after you found yourself in the situation you're in now? In other words, when you get out of this situation, will you be walking a different path (the one you describe here), or will the temptations that led you here overwhelm you so that God will take a back seat? Do you think it's easier to follow the Word of God when you have few choices to make (because others are making them for you, like counselors, judges, etc.), or when you are back in control of your decisions?

Steel Kills

What it do, Beat? Today I'll be writing by myself. I usually write pieces with my boy, Lugo, but he got shipped out to CYA, so I'm just gonna get wit' it on my own.

Every day is a second closer to death
Say the wrong thing and you'll catch one in the chest
It's a shame. it's been like this for years
Too many mothers sheddin' bloody tears
Guns took the lives of too many young souls
It's ballistic what lead could do when it's cold
Drive-bys shootin' bullets from afar
Two-year-old child shot to death in his front yard
It's so absurd, crimes committed in this day-an'-age
Youth commitin' suicide every single day for the smallest mistake
Find yourself locked in a cage
Which only seems to further enrage us
To act out in the most ruthless ways
Back in the old days, it was fist-to-fist
Nowadays families get death certificates
'Cause their son got someone pissed
I can't say when the killin' will end
'Cause I don't think it ever will
As long as this corrupt world produces steel

-Zodiac, Santa Clara

From The Beat: It's not steel that kills, it's human beings who use that steel. After all, steel also produces bridges, buildings, cars and many other things we rely on daily. We agree with you, though, that things have gotten way out of hand, and that the killing seems to go on and on forever. Since you predict it will never end, how do you see yourself fitting into this picture? If the world is corrupt, does that mean you must also be corrupt? We are all closer to death with every tick of the clock, so the question is, how do you want to live your life until you get there?

Drive-bys shootin' bullets from afar
Two-year-old child shot to death
in his front yard

Guns

Guns--they are easy to get, and when you do get one in your hands and pull the trigger, you seem to get trigger happy, like loving sex for your first time.

Anyways, I think you can't stop people from getting guns, even if there's a law. They won't care about having it until you get caught with it, so I think if you wanna go around shooting people and thinking you're all bad because you have a gun, then, when you get caught for murder, you start crying about it.

Forget all that. Just join the Army and you can have a lot of guns and shoot all the US's enemies, and not trip about going to prison or jail. So you make the right choice and see where life leads you to.

-Lil' W, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Believe it or not, there are rules even in war. And there are some U.S. soldiers already doing prison time for shooting people they believed were the enemy, but violating the rules of war to do it. We hope this piece means that you don't think it's necessary to carry a gun, because there is a lot of evidence that people who carry guns are often controlled by what they should be controlling.

Fading

The rain pours down all around you. There is no shelter in sight. It's always been this way with you. The rain is only a metaphor for problems in your life coming at you from all directions.

There's nothing saving from this situation of mournful solitude. The acts, your past come back to haunt you like a return of the worst day of your life. The pain and sorrow builds up like a boulder on your shoulder 'til you collapse under the pressure like a long-slide.

You snap only not like you're thinking you would. It's a good thing. You snap into a simple routine of everyday life. You're somewhat happy for once. The only permanent gloom of everyday subsides to a dull glow and for the first time since you can remember, you smile and your smile fades as you're newly awaken sunlight is snatched away by darkness. The darkness caused by you.

As you ponder on your journey through your old life you finally realize that it really is you. You are your won darkness. You keep yourself miserable. So you end it. With a pill and a bottle, your darkness goes black.

-Darkness, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow what a powerful piece. What inspired you to write this? Has your pass started to haunt you? How can we avoid all this darkness? Can you face it head on? Does writing help? Talking about it aloud? We all make mistakes and guide ourselves to directions that aren't beneficial to our lives. The question is what can we do to avoid all this darkness from coming into our lives? Do you have a cure?

PIECES OF THE WEEK

When My Dad Died

My dad was taking me to school and we stopped at a stoplight. Then, a car pulled up and they hopped out.

My dad pulled out his gun and shot the first guy, then they came from my side and pulled me out, my dad shot him and he dropped me out of the car.

They were pistol-whipping him. I ran over and tried to help, but they backhanded me. I was laying on the ground - and POW! Everything was silent.

I then looked up as they drove away. My dad was on the ground, and had blood on his shirt. I was crying over him. Then the rollers came. I will never forget that day.

-Scooby, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is very sad! To witness your father lose his life. This is saddest and most painful experience. You have our respects. Don't let his loss hurt your life or end your life like his. You're young and very smart. We are sure that you can turn your life around, and be the person you wish you had as a father. Someday you will be a father, and you wouldn't want your future kids to experience any type of scenes that can hurt their emotional status, like it happened to you. Right!? Life continues and you should too.

When My Mom Almost Got Shot

I was six years old, my mom and I were chilling on the porch, then out of nowhere, a rival came up and pointed a gun to my mom's head.

My mom was a gangster, so she had funk with him. She told me to go in the house, so I did. I was looking out the window and I saw him cock the gun. Them my mom smacked the gun out his hand and pulled hers out. Right when she was going to pull the trigger, the rollers came. My mom got locked up for a few years. There's my story.

-Scooby, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Luckily nobody got hurt! It seems like you've seen and experience a lot of violence with guns. What is your take on it? Do you like guns regardless to what it has done to your father and to your mother? How is your mom now? Did she change? Is she a better person after doing a few years in jail? Did it teach you/her a lesson? Or are you going to continue to follow their footsteps? If so, you know where this will get you. What's it going to be Scooby?

If she was alive today, she would tell me, "Mijo, what are you doing with your life? What do you want out of life?"

Grieving Times

There's so many people losing their family members to violence. So many moms grieving, 'cause they lost their only son or daughter to the gangs. Gangs are everywhere in this world. There will never be peace in this place. Children grieving because their mom and dad were never there to love them.

I lost my grandma at the age of sixteen. I still don't stop grieving over her. She practically raised me. She was always telling me, "Nothing good's gonna come out of what you're doing. This is not the way you should be living."

I never listened to her advice. If she was alive today, she would tell me, "Mijo, what are you doing with your life? What do you want out of life?"

I'm tried of grieving over loved ones—it just brings more pain to my life, and in here all there is to do is stress and think, and I'm tired of both. Well, before you do something, stop and think about what you're doing, if you're gonna hurt your loved ones, or what?

Well, I don't need no mental health counseling, or anything else. I'll deal with my problems with my family. I really like expressing myself to The Beat Within. Someone's listening to you, and what's on your mind. Well, this king's gotta go for now.

-Raul, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We're glad The Beat gives you an outlet to express your feelings, but we're sorry you're stressing so much. If you know what your beloved grandmother would be telling you about changing your life, then wouldn't it be a sign of respect and love if you did what she would advise? You know how much she loved you, so what's preventing you from acting on her very wise words: "Nothing good's gonna come out of what you're doing"?

Lessons Can Be Learned

Lessons are learned by people in many ways. Sometimes it's enough to simply think about it and learn right from wrong, but sometimes lessons can be surely found within violent acts that take place, though the acts may not be completely necessary. Since they have taken place, there is surely ample room for lessons to be expressed. The violent acts are concrete examples for people to learn from.

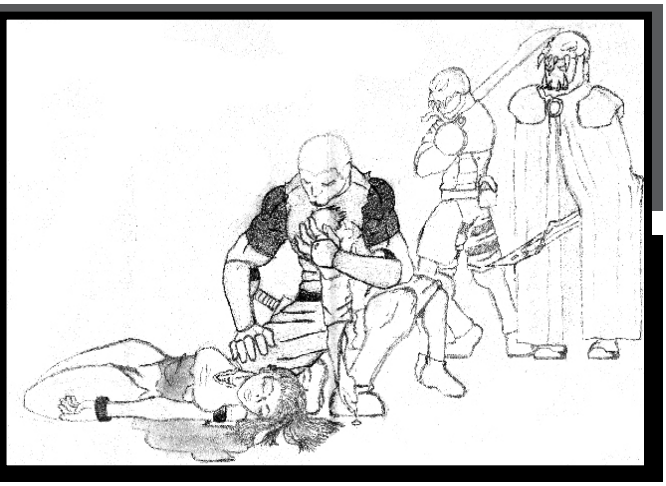
Getting someone to preach the effects of gun violence can put some morals in people's minds. Surely seeing the effects of it take place show the outcomes far more effectively. Actions clearly speak louder than words, and by seeing what happened at Virginia Tech, many people can learn the lesson of what gun violence can do. Therefore, I definitely think that peace can be taught through violence. By seeing what happened there, the lesson of not letting your anger get the better of you is clearly expressed to those who hear of the incident.

Other aspects and incidents in the world are always being used to teach peace. Lessons are something that lie everywhere. It's up to people to seek them and live by them. One can look at anything and choose to take the good from it. Positive incidents obviously emit positive lessons, but one can take a negative situation and still learn how not to be or how to live and behave.

Though I say that peace can be taught through violence, it shouldn't have to go that far for people to realize it. The day people realize it without having to learn from mistakes, I feel that those disastrous incidents won't occur, because people already know right from wrong. One must allow themselves to be constantly open minded to be able to absorb all lessons the world has to offer.

-Open Minded, Santa Clara

From The Beat: You didn't sign your name to this fine piece of writing, so we had to make one up for you. We hope you choose your own name next time. We admire how well you write, and how deeply you think. So, what's a deep thinker like you doing in a place like this? Or, to put that question another way, how come you didn't learn the lessons necessary to keep you free?



PIECES OF THE WEEK

Broken Flower

I'm a flower that shines through the lonely fields
Alone inside a place where my nights is cold as a stone
My life broken like a dog eatin' a bone.
The colorful views that's in my reach
My broken flower will teach.
I'm a broken flower that's feelin' stress
And my roots feelin' like less.
The sun need to shine to bring me a happy smile
Than my feelings will run happy and wild.
Are you the flower that's down like me?
Lonely be floatin' around free.
Need a happiness to make you happy and smile
Then my feelings will run happy, wild.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: This is one of your most haunting poems. They make perfume by crushing flowers – maybe your heart in this poem is that broken flower, crushed to make a fragrance that can bring joy to anyone neither. Some poets would say that is the price we pay for great beauty.

Out In The Streets

I got took to CPS,'cause something bad happened to me. I ain't gonna lie, this guy had sex with me. OK – he raped me. And so I went to the hospital and the police was called, and then they came and said what happened.

I was out on the streets, selling my body, and then they said did you know the guy who did it to you. I said I didn't know the guy. I went in his car, and he brought me to a dark place and did it. And didn't have no kind of nice about it.

He slapped me in the face – I was scared, he did his thing and then he told me to take my pants and my shoes off and then he snapped my cell phone. Then he kicked me off the car and rode away.

A lady found me just crying and asked me what was wrong crying, and I was like, 'cause of this guy. I went to the hospital, but while I was waiting, I kept nodding off and they called my mom, so I ran out the emergency exit door and after that it was over. –

-Lil' Tata, Alameda

From The Beat: There are two bright lights in this sad story. One is that there was someone who saw you for what you were: A brave and frightened young girl who needed help after something terrible happened to you that you didn't deserve. That's the lady who made sure you got to the hospital. The other bright light is of course you – the fact that you had the courage to tell us about this, and the courage to let it go down in print. Often, when young girls just like you have been assaulted, beat, raped, and they've kept silent about it, because they were too afraid. You weren't afraid to talk about it, and because of that, maybe other people who read this will realize that they have the right to tell their stories, and the right to be heard. Reading about what you went through will make them realize they're not alone.

Peace Without Guns

What do guns solve? Protection? Safety? What? Is there a real reason for having a gun? Yeah, they use them for war to protect us. But what about the guns used to also destroy us? What happened to the peace without guns? The fake ones you see on TV when you were a kid, like Power Rangers. What happened to the finger gun we used to play with?

What has guns ever brought to us regular citizens except violence? Protection is just another excuse to have a gun. What do guns solve? We ain't cowboys who go to showdowns. We live in a modern society where guns aren't needed to be shown off or to shoot the ones you hate. To me guns don't make the man. You do!

-Chowsee U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds to us that you are well on your way to becoming a responsible man. So many young men love guns because they make them feel like they are grown, but the feeling itself betrays their childish thinking. Do you think there is a direct connection between the guns we see on TV and play with as kids and the real guns that so many kids are using today? We wish everyone thought about guns the way you do.

Regrets

Mistakes can lead to regrets, and regrets can lead to less mistakes. There is value in that. The valve in learning prevention of doing what is wrong makes life seem like an experiment. By this I mean that life is full of trial and error. However, some get it quicker than others. But do not give up and call it a day if it has not worked out yet. Sometimes it takes forever, and that is if you are lucky. Others may mess up once because that is all the chance they are given.

I could give you an endless list of mistakes and regrets resulted from failed experiments, but I am working on a new one. This one is filled with the most hope and full of promise. Whether or not this new plan and path of life I take proves to be a success or not still dose not change the constant variable of all of this: my never-ending effort in making the best of my life.

-Khanh U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We agree with you that life can be a series of hit-or-miss attempts to experience as much as you can, and to learn from those experiences. Even if what you learn was to avoid some things, you have still learned. And, as long as you continue in that effort, the mistakes you've learned from will become fewer and fewer. Of course, some "experiments" can lead to permanent (even fatal) consequences, so we're not encouraging you to try everything that comes your way. But we can see that you are someone who thinks, who analyzes, who is self-critical, as well as someone who is willing to risk for the sake of knowledge and growth. Yes, sometimes you will open a door you wish you had kept shut (and then you will have to exert some effort to close it again). But by opening doors, you will open yourself to a world that many may never discover. We think you're on an exciting journey, but one filled with danger as well as with treasure (the kind of treasure that comes with knowledge). Keep moving forward with open eyes, and keep teaching what you learn.

Original Gangsta

Mayne, I know this OG that made it out the 'hood who be comin' back to sell Jordans and Forces. That ain't his only hustle, but he be using that money to buy accessories an' shhh. Anyways though, I really admire that man 'cause he only 25, and he don't sell nothing bad to his own people. He watches out for his daughter and the young homies. Also, he stopped smokin', drinkin', and sellin' crème 'cause he didn't want to expose that mess to his kid.

Although I'm a female, there's a lot of things that I see in him that I would like to see in myself. Hopefully, I'll be a good influence like him in my community. I need to stop tryna get rich messin' wit' dis weak shhh, and accept the fact that it ain't gon do nothing for me besides put me in here, give me a record and put my life in danger.

I really think I'm finna do all right this time, and that's because the last four times I was locked up in here always planned on how I was gonna make more, more money doin' some weak shhh. How this look: I been doin' what I do for the last three years of my life (makin' money), and to be completely honest, I really ain't got shhh to show for it.

Anyways, e'rybody who read dis here, pray fo' yo' girl 'cause the court decided to give me another chance and they're sendin me to Walden House. Peace, Love and chicken grease. Keep y'all heads up.

-Maya U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We hope you get those prayers, but in truth, we don't think you need them. If the old saying is true that God helps those who help themselves, then we think you are on the road to getting the help you need. You seem to have figured things out pretty good for yourself. You've looked at what you've been doing, and decided it isn't working for you, so it's time to try doing something different. (We always find it strange the number of our writers who say what they're doing isn't working, so they're going to do more of it...) Walden House may no longer be an option for you (we heard they were about to close), but even if that isn't the program, there are programs and services that will benefit you, but you have to want them and seek them out. Ask your counselors, your PO, your attorney (The Beat) for all the help you need, and we think doors will soon start opening for you. Thank you for keeping it real.

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Introduction

What's up, Beat Within? This your boy C-los from U7. I been here since last year in November, but since I'm on split and you guys come every Tuesday, I don't come out for you guys' program. But I do read The Beat. I would like to write something for you guys:

Locked Up

I'm locked up because I did a crime, so I don't say damn the system or the SFPD 5-0 because they didn't put me in here, I did. Some guys here — well almost everybody — say, "Forget the 5-0! Forget the system!" Me personally, I hate it when other guys be like, "Man, this food nasty! The staff trying play me! I hate wearing somebody else's clothing. They don't gives enough recs! Man, I miss my momma! I hate being locked up!"

Hello! Wake up estupidos, you're in jail. You're not in Disneyland. Jail is not made for you to like it. In fact, it is made for you to hate it. So stop acting like babies and do your time. Nobody likes to be locked up and if you do, then you need a hug! Even if you're right, and staff says you're not, you can't do nothing about it.

Like I've said, you're in jail. You might as well take it how it comes, I read some pieces from The Beat Within, and I can't believe how hypocritical theses guys are, saying this and that, trying to sound hella poetic and shhh, like they really changed, always blaming how you get raised, Man, you put yourself in here and don't be coming up to me with some bullshhh! If you're going to change, don't say it... Do it. A'ight I'm out

-C-Los U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Well, even though we think looking to the ways you were raised and the conditioning you were exposed to as children is important to understanding both the choices available to you and the actual choices you made, we also agree with you that each person is ultimately responsible for the choices he or she makes and the consequences that come with those choices. So okay, you resent those who complain about jail conditions when they are the ones who put themselves here so they should be blaming themselves, but what about you. If you hate it here (as you must), then what changes are you about?

A Woman? Me?

Won't open up, much like a pearl
Click goes the clock, I'm still a girl
We all can watch the world be crazy
But time won't stop... now a young lady
You may not hear, or see it comin'
One day for sure I'll be a woman
I do not fear what must become
My anxious heart's a beating drum
Anticipation fills the air
Then it seems that nothing's there
Flames turned to smoke, I couldn't see
Blink once, or twice... there's no more me
An image died, my soul's what's left
I saved a life with one last breath
Although the journey will be wild
And as of now I'm still a child
I'll overcome more than I have
So then, long cries will change to laughs
A woman? Me? It's not my turn
I still have oh, so much to learn

-Purple Hayze, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: The irony about this poem is that, by acknowledging how much more you have to learn, you show yourself to be much closer to becoming a woman than to the immature child you used to be (as all of us were). There will never be a time when there isn't something more to learn (which is one of the wonderful things about being human), so when will you know you have become the woman you are on a path to becoming? What are some things that you still need to work on? What are you learning about yourself (and the world) that will help you in the future? You have great skills and a great heart, so we know that when you feel ready, you will be able to teach by your own fine example.

Tragedy

I have something I want to share. Why when 32 people at Virginia gets killed it catches world-wide news. I mean, that is a tragedy, I feel sorry for the people who lost their families, but when someone gets killed in Oakland nothing happens, no one cares. All they care about is it's not a white person. As long as it stays black on black, the government things we're doing them a favor. We going around exterminating our own race and no one thinks about it like that.

-Disease, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a powerful commentary. You express sympathy towards the families of the Virginia Tech shooting victims, because they did indeed experience a terrible tragedy, but you also point out that families are losing their young people every day in hateful and/or senseless shootings in Oakland and other urban communities. And the media hardly pays any attention at all! That is a tragedy. We are excited that you chose to share your observations in the Beat. It's understandable to feel angry about what's going on in your community and to feel outrage towards a government and media that seem to be indifferent and cold. We just hope you will use your anger and your sharp mind to make a difference. Keep writing, keep thinking, keep talking about these issues. Your opinions matter.

In Loving Memory of Wayne Gordon

Blown through the wind that flies Move through those who hate, let it just die. Memory of my loving brother now is gone. I'll screech the world out into you – come back home. Now I'm seein' you ain't never comin' back.

It's killing me slowly to live with this hurtful pain. I'm closin' my eyes and things still seem the same.

Cryin' and prayin' that you go through the Lord's gates. My time is gon' come so keep open arms with faith. In loving memory of my only blood that I really miss.

When that bullet came, I wish it would have missed I try not to cry but these memories got me pissed Sometimes I feel like giving my life to be with you The youngsta 18 years old, showed me that the game is grue Money was all you talked about, never a girl Only if you would have got a good one, she'll change ya world. But now you layin' in a place where last in our head In loving memory of Wayne Gordon who is now dead. Forever my brother, that's livin' through souls lost my closest brother now life feels cold. To my loving brother that rest above.

I shed tears from pain, lonely, and also – love.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: The pain is what moved you off track when you were doing so well, got you on drugs and on rage and finally committing crimes. The loneliness, what you feel now, is what drives you to write these poems of mourning and sorrow...but it's the love that will carry you through these next years in jail -- and beyond. You have so much love in you – for your brother, who lives on in your heart, for the friends who are now gone, for your son who will wait for you and love you no matter what.... and, we hope, for yourself, and the future – still bright –that waits for you. Until then, we will be here to proudly publish the records of your heart.

Massacre

I want to touch up on that it was thirty people in one day that is a murder rate and a high percent of family grieving off that you know just picture your son or daughter leaving home to go to school than you turn on the news and find out that they have been shot. You might as well put your children in the army because if they're not safe at school, or in the community or a plane then where are we safe? The world is what human beings make it. We can destroy or create and that's true power for a human.

-Sunny D, Alameda

From The Beat: That is true power for a human, -you said it very well. It's so frightening when humans choose to use their power (and their anger) to destroy a lot of lives, like in a mass shooting or a terrorist attack. But the positive side is: we can use our power to create, we can wage peace instead of waging war. Is there a time when you felt that you had the power to make a bad situation better or make the world a more peaceful place? Tell us about it!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

Dear Baby

I really miss you a lot. How many months is it,
Seven or eight months
you are pregnant with my child?
Damn you are right I did some dumb shhh.
I should be with you or making money for our new comer.
Don't be stressing though because I'm suppose to get out soon.
My dad visited me and told me
everything you had told him to tell to me and most of all I love you too.
Man I bet yo' dad is trippin' that I'm locked up and shhh...
he probably won't respect me like he did before.
Eh, though heard you been getting good grades and shhh, you go girl
I know it's hard but keep doing yo' best.
I've been thinking if you keep holding for two or one more month
our baby can be Cancer like me
or a Gemini like your mom.
Ah this is really messed up. In a week we gone be moving to the new hall
which is like prison for real.
I've been thinking of names but it's not up to me if I'm in here
just make sure it's a well respected name.
Diapers, putting him to sleep, making sure he eat, clothes, a roof over his head
man just thinking 'bout some of it is stressing me.
I hope you healthy so our baby can be healthy too.
I don't know what else to say but I love you.

-Immature, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow, you have sooo much to be thinking about. You seem to have a good head on your shoulders, and we hope you use it to get yourself ready for the new life that you're responsible for. It's a lifetime of joy that you have to look forward to, but you need to be ready to create a healthy, stable environment which isn't easy. Best of luck to you and your family!

Guns Can't Change A Person

Guns it could never change a person but people could change guns
ask me how I wouldn't know but as the first time I held a gun
my heart was beating harder then I can ever imagine.

(Guns don't' kill people, people kill people)

Again I tell you I'll stay the same what is in the game guns could never make a person change at least that's what I'm sayin'.
A-K's, 45's don't even want to pull the trigger.
This is the end of my insane crazy sayin' about guns.
Guns could never change a person

Peace! Stay true and think about what I'm say'in

-Kevin, "The Land of Enchantment"

From The Beat: You couldn't have said it better Kevin. "Guns don't kill people, people kill people." It's good to stay the same, but remember everyone has room for a little change. Especially when it's a change for the better and this goes for people of any age. We know you say you'll stay the same, but if some change is not made is this the life you want to live? Never give up Kevin, and remember change is good.

Rainy Days

Windy wind, blow my way Only I stand on this rainy day. Rainy rain, inside my busy veins, help me overcome these hurtful thangs. Rainy rain, drop some cold wet water balls.

Give me the faith to stand tall as these walls Cry, cry, just cry with me. It's rainy days in life -- you'll see. Nighty night, watch me away. Take me to a better place, I'll stay Coldy cold, what's going through the wind I'm lonely, I need a friend. Rainy rain, through the eyes of pain Stuck in a shell where there's shame Nighty night, wash me away Take me to a better place, I'll stay.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: There's a poet from the 19th century named Gerard Manley Hopkins, who migh well be your brother in poetry. He would be proud if he saw what you did, taking all those words: Windy wind, rainy rain, coldy cold, and turning them into a music that you can feel on your face, just like the weather. Poetry is the place where words and music meet -- and like all great poets, he understood that. Like all great poets, so do you.

Take me to a better place, I'll stay Coldy cold, what's going through the wind I'm lonely, I need a friend.

The Love For My Brother Will Never Die

I was twelve years old when me and my brother was at a dice game and a car pulled up and three people got out the car and walked up to my brother and told him to beg for his life and my brother look at them and said "you going to kill me in front of my da baby?"

My brother turned and looked at me and said, "I love you little ninja." Once he said that these three people hit my brother numerous times with their AK 47. Then these people looked at me and started running. I just started crying and just held on to my brother so tight and just asked him to, "get up please just get up!" I just kept saying that and then I got up and just ran fast as I could, and just cried and cried.

I will never forget that my brother told me he loved me and I will never forget that he called me da baby and that's how I got that name "Da Baby" I love you Dre for.

-Da Baby, Alameda

From The Beat: What a tragic piece you write. Not many of us could imagine watching the last seconds of someone live right before one's death. RIP Dre! WE can only hope you step up and take charge of your life and live it with dignity and respect. Forget the lifestyle that took your brother, the time is now to live life right!

The Life To Live

I'm running around freely,
Enjoying my life
Spending unforgettable moments
With my future wife
Happy as can be
Because I'm not locked up in a facility
Where people just don't give a damn about you,
Or what you're going through
they just get into your face and tell you screw you!
So I'm very happy not to be in that facility,
I'm going to school preparing for my career
'cause life is too short, and death is near.
There are no words to express how I feel
it's like a once in a lifetime deal,
so I'm taking advantage of my freedom
showin' my family the most of love
because I know I need 'em
I'm shocked to open my eyes and see four walls in white
I wish it wasn't what it seems.
Another one of my dreams that I have every night!

-Juan, Alameda

From The Beat: Your day will come Juan, when the dream becomes a reality. We hope you stay focused and fulfill your probation and stay away from drama as you pursue your goals.

The Chase

"Wake up!" Is what I said as I got up and wiped my eyes. I was still messed up from the night before.

"We got a car!" My homies said as I got up and put on my shirt, as I finished getting ready I walked into the kitchen I put my keys in my pocket grabbed a lighter off the counter and put on my hat. As we walked out the door I asked where they had parked they told me at Village Inn.

As we walked up the street I lit my cigarette and we talked about how they stole the car. They told me that they saw that the keys were in it and it was warming up.

As we made it to the car I saw that it was a 2002 white Grand Prix. We got in it and drove downtown to pick up some stuff then we went to eat.

As we left the restaurant I told my homies to take me back home to drop off the stuff we had just bought. I had told them just to drop me off at the Village Inn but they insisted to take me all the way home.

As we passed the Botanical Gardens I saw a cop car parked in the parking lot. I told my homies to turn down the next road but all sudden a cop got behind us my heart dropped.

All of us in the car had warrants as we drove down a little more we turned down a road but it happed to be a dead end, we where about three miles from my house and it was a long run home.

We drove to the end of the road and stopped as the cop blocked us in. He told us to step out of the vehicle.

We all stepped out, there were three of us.

The cop told us to get on the ground, as I was going down I turned and ran, I hopped over a ditch and then two fences. When I ran through a neighborhood I heard kids screaming as I jumped through their backyards. I hopped one more fence and ended up in a farm like area. I hide behind a trailer where I heard my homie yell for me to wait up. I sat there for two minutes but he never came, so I started to run some more. I hopped over another fence, and found myself in the Botanical Gardens. I ran some more and took off my shirt.

I put the stuff we had just bought in my pants. As I walked along the fence I saw a cop driving down a dirt road, I tried to hide but there was no where to go. As the cop stepped out of his car he pulled out a tazer gun and told me to freeze.

I walked up to the fence and asked what was wrong? I told him I was just jogging. He told me I fit the description of some one they were looking for and wanted me to jump the fence.

As I jumped it another cop came and put some handcuffs on me. They took me back to the scene as we pulled up I thought it was over. The cop that had pulled us over was standing right in front of the car; they got me out and asked him if I was one of the guys in the car.

I was surprised when to cop said no he would have recognized me. The other cop looked at me and said that's a first. The cop took my handcuffs off and apologized and asked if I wanted a ride home, he took me half way home and I ran the rest of the way. When I got home both my homies were there.

"We made it!" I said as I sat on the couch and caught my breath.

-Lorenzo, "The Land of Enchantment"

From the Beat: It's all about choices we make. It's easy to say I won't break the law, yet the hard part is following your words. Knowing that the car was stolen, there were two choices, one get in the car or two walk away. The right choice would have been to simply walk away. Next time take a step back and remember the time you were locked up, and how much you disliked it. Is being behind bars the life you want to lead? Life is all about choices, and, no, there are no easy choices in life. We all simply know right from wrong, and make the choice from that.

RIP Momma

I remember the day you died August 5th and your birthday July 26. Me and my brother had to bury a single mother.

I've seen her screw, smoke, beat, and love others, but I ain't trippin', I got a strong heart I grew up with my family split apart.

Damn, I tried to tell people how I've lived. I turned and learned the streets as a kid in San Francisco. My mother asleep as I hit the streets, midnight on a school night.

As a young G I eat sleep and bought my own clothes. I wish my mother was a mother at home but now she's gone...

-Immature, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece breaks our hearts. When you told people about your life, what did they say? Who has attempted to help you in your life? Why was it hard to accept the help? What are you lookin' for?

Violence Makes Everything Worse

I think there's a point in life where everyone learns that violence is not the answer. Whether it's your first time being locked up for an assault or your 15th time. Violence usually makes everything worse.

When someone messes with you and you get angry, you're the victim. Don't use violence because you turn everything around and you make them the victim. You can really screw yourself over that way. When someone became violent towards a loved one of mine, I realized no one should use violence to solve anything.

-Pookie Babie U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We have seen the truth of what you wrote here over and over again. Yet, very few (whether they are young or old, kids on the street or presidents of the United States) ever seem to learn this lesson. It seems that human beings resort to violence in all sorts of situations, despite the evidence of their own eyes and experience how it only creates bigger problems. When you're feeling angry, how do you tame your feelings so they don't erupt into violence?

Innocent Blood

He was the good kid, never into trouble
Middle class type kid, never grew up in rubble
The type known to succeed in society
Never really thought this would be his reality
The type who just wanted to play a lil' ball
Never known the inside of these halls
Caught in the wrong place, wrong time
Yeah I know you heard this line
Walkin down the street on a late night
Heard a little scuffle, didn't know it was a gang fight.
Minded his own business and kept it movin' on
Little did he know he would be movin on
Car comes creepin' and he sees people run
Looks around and sees the guy with a gun
Shots start ringin' out, people hittin' the floor
Shooter steps out and slams the car door
Looks to his left and sees a body drop dead
One bullet penetrates blood rushing from his head
The shooter begins to chase his enemy his way
Frozen in his tracks don't know what to do or say
Goes to the wall to hide out within the madness
This day will cause many more people sadness
Feels his head spinning and becomes light headed
Walking down the street today is what he regretted
Touches his stomach and feels wet and cold
Looks down and its too late, story been told
Innocent blood on the pavement and lawn
Another innocent bystander's life is gone

-Big Vick, Alameda

From The Beat: Brutal tale to our topics this week. A tragedy too many people have come to read and know. You Vick are a part of the solution, continue to push yourself and educate others that there is a better way!

PIECES OF THE WEEK

The Love of My Life

When Marcellus died I wanted to end my life
But before I knew it, something beautiful came my way,
A love that I can never give up
And baby it's only you I trust
I thought twice about what I was doing, but having you was a must.
That's right, baby, I must have you
And for you, there's nothing I wouldn't do.
All these ninjas out there want to be my man.
But I didn't want them, ;;cause I had you in my hands
I love you so much and I'm sorry for being away
But the day I get out I'll never leave your smiling face
You're my heart, my soul, my faith
I love you so much and I'm doin' my best to change
I will cross the ocean for you
I will try and bring you the moon
Anything you want I will try to do
If you think I was talking about a ninja you a fool
I'm talkin' about my beautiful daughter, betchu wish I was thinkin' of you
Lanaya Haley Rennee, brought in this world, August 29, 2006
That's when my old life was dismissed
I got somethin' to live for now, and it's not that bangin' shhh.
Rest by God Cell, Wayne, Bin Laden and Earl, you are all missed
I'm on my way, I'm just running late
I got y 'all niece in my arms and it feels great.

-Vanessa, Alameda

From The Beat: Nice set up! You had us all thinking this was just another love poems, one of those poems that people might recopy for three different people and post in three different letters, but you tricked us all – turns out this was a love poem that celebrates the deepest, most profound love of all. And yes, your life means something totally different now, doesn't it? What's changed the most? What's changed about how you live, how you want to live, how you plan your future?

Have You Ever

Have you ever lived my life, spent 1 minute in my shoes
If you haven't then tell me why you judge me as you do
Have you ever went to sleep hoping not to awake
Have you ever looked for love in way too many dates
Have you ever had 2 lives and didn't know what to do
Have you ever had an unwanted pregnancy forcing you to choose
Have you ever seen your dad almost kill your mom
Have you ever helped your pain by singing a sorrow song
Have you ever felt such pain you cried yourself to sleep at night
Have you ever had a friend that took their own life
Have you ever lived my life spent 1 minute in my shoes
If you haven't then tell me why you judge me as you do.

-Makayla, Alameda

From The Beat: You asked some really good questions and you're so right when you come across with the idea of how can you judge me if you don't really know me. Do you feel like too many people judge you without getting to know you first? What kind of people make judgments about you without knowing you? Have you ever judged someone else before getting to know them?

Have you ever had 2 lives
and didn't know what to do
Have you ever had an unwanted pregnancy
forcing you to choose

Losing My Son

The only thing in life that I regret was my son.

I don't regret having my son, but I regret losing him. He was the most important thing that ever happened to me. Many people don't know what they are missing out on when they are not there when their child is born.

I missed on a good part of my son's life because I wasn't there. When my son died it felt like a part of me died with him.. I fucked up by not really being involved in my son's life. I fucked up by not really being involved in his life. Like I should have been there, and he would have died in my arms. Better yet he would have never died.

Man I miss my son. RIP to Robert Lee.

-Michael, Alameda

From The Beat: The loss of a child is one of the most agonizing things a person can go through. It's terrible enough to lose any loved ones, but a baby seems like a stab against the order of the universe. Please accept the condolences of all of us at The Beat for what you went through, and what you are still going through. There is one thing though – of all the people we've known who lost their children, every single one has blamed him or herself, thinking that if they only had done differently, the child would have survived. But it's not like that... his death wasn't your fault, and please please please don't add even more to your pain by blaming yourself. We know it must feel like the pain will never go away, and in many ways it won't. But it will become something you learn how to handle, and carry with you, and we hope that one day you also have more children, because you still have so much love inside you left to give.

Must Be Nice: RIP Marcellus

There's a time for everybody when they are lost and confused, when they don't know what in heaven they can do. I had that time once, it went on about several months. It was when Marcellus died. Not only died, left to God from my arms. Right in front of my eyes he stopped breathing, his heart stopped beating. My best friend died right in front of me.

God sent those angels to take Cell away, he was just answering Cell's questions, and prayers, especially after Marnicka had his beautiful baby girl.

But he died for a reason, I remember Marcellus telling me that when he died, play "Must be Nice" at his funeral. I used to say shut up, why would you say that, you're not gonna die. ... Or he'd say "When I die take care of Marianna."

One of the last things he said to me was "I'ma keep this wristband till I die... it was the first band that said "father" that you got at the hospital when the baby was born.

Sure enough, he had it on when he died... but who would have thought it would be so soon? I sure didn't that's the last call I ever thought I would get. , saying Marcellus got shot. Why did it have to happen like that?

Every day, every night, every morning, I think of Marcellus and what he would be doing if he was still sittin' next to me. I found a piece of paper he wrote on about two months ago, and it said God why don't you just take me out of this world, I don't want to be here no more. But what was it that was making him so miserable that he wanted to die. I don't know, but I love you Cell, you're always in my heart. Rest by God bra. Your niece Lanaya loves you. Even though she never got to meet you, she sees you shinin' in your pictures.

-Vanessa, Alameda

From The Beat: Thanks to this beautiful and detailed memorial, Marcellus won't just shine in his pictures, he also shines in the memories you have painted of him. His joys of fatherhood, his fears about the future, even his darker private moments. The love you feel for him shines in every word, every comma... and you paint a picture of a wonderful, troubled young man with a huge heart whose loss can teach all of us the value of the the lives cut short too soon.

My Life

Dear Lord my life ain't right
everyday I toss and turn in my sleep all night
thinking bout how I grow up and how I live
trying to make it in this game but the game won't give
see I done, done a lot of dirt
and now I'm startin the hurt
feeling like I'm lost in time
stuck in thought in my mind
sellin' nickels and dimes
stuck wit' the glock on theblock
shhh I'm feeling like the hands on the clock
and I'm stuck doing time.

2x's Chorus
for years Lord I been stuck in a maze
and I'm going through some things but I guess it's a faze
tryin' to stay wake in this game but I am lost in a daze
the system tryin' to do me and it's time to change my ways

Verse 2
Ya Lord I'm still stuck on that last year drama
got no one to depend on not even my mama
and my girl say I act more like a boy then a man
and to end the story shhh.

-RayShawn, Alameda

From The Beat: Whoa! Excellent piece! Now why is it that the stuff that gets so much play on the radio glorifies the game you describe as a maze? Why doesn't anybody talk about all of the time lost or the young lives destroyed? Thank you for your words and we hope that the readers out there are listening.

Screw The World

The way I feel I just say screw the world.
I'm mad at everything plus my girl,
but real talk. I don't really care.
Inside me the feelings ain't there.
For nobody. Not even myself
that's why I do drugs and mess up my health,
I'm die one day, might as well sav it out,
ride out, cock back, let some stress out,
then go home, smoke a fat ass blunt,
maybe a chewy, turn on the PS2,
slap in Grand Theft Auto make the game turn true,
I'm missin' a screw that's why I do what I do,
live this life until my time is due,
but sometimes I think I wanna cry, when I picture how I die,
stabbed, beaten, shot straight beef between my eyes,
but why? What goes around comes around,
after everything I'd be dead or prison found,
and hey that's just the life I live and like I said I can really give,
and it would be coo' to change one day
but 'till then I just pray to see another day.

-Angelo, Alameda

From The Beat: Wow. Really stunning writing Angelo. The things you express in this piece are things that we see your peers feeling all around you, but not everyone has the guts to say it, or maybe even the tools to express it. We thank you for sharing this with us and with our readers, and we wonder what's in store for you? You seem to be stuck in the middle of two opposing mindsets, but your spirit knows which direction it would take if it had the choice. Remember that you do have the choice, and no matter how hard it might seem (because it will be hard), you have the strength to change.

got no one to depend on not even my mama

Just Another Poem

I'm tired, I miss my friends that I haven't seen since they got locked
up before me, but I miss my family the most. My P.O. just told me tat
my next check up court date is going to be in November, and I been
locked up since February: I'm out. But in the meantime, here you go.
The wrong way I was steppin''
So what's my next question
Tryin' not to grab my weapon
Or end up too soon in heaven
'Cause I had it good with my wife
Wanted to have her for the rest of my life
Hang with stars and drive fast cars
Always wore a vest for protection at the bars,
Gettin' my honey every dollar, every cent
'Cause if I don't make money, it don't make sense.
Didn't have a father, became a robber
And played with choppers
Now I kick it like soccer
But always no hesitation, money's motivation
Got caught and brought to the station
My Max is four years, now I'm up in here
Saw my girl full of tears, she'll have a new man in a year.

-J, Alameda

From The Beat: This is much more than just another poem. It's a sharp and bettersweet song of regret, and your rhymes are never more than just other rhymes. Wrapping the sad story of how you ended up here around those clean rhythms takes true artistry... and now we're just looking forward to the day when you tell a new story... not about how you fell into the hole, but how you climbed out of it, girl or no girl.

Let Me Leave

I'm tired of being in the hall this ain't my home
Tryna be strong but I still feel alone
Can't take no more of these county clothes

I'm missing my family I know they hurting
Just waitin to go home so I can close this curtain
Of my life
This weak ass system ain't right

The judge ain't on my team
He don't give a damn that I wanted to keep my record clean

I know I didn't do it
The judge know it too
It always seem like it's the world vs. you
I want him to be in my shoes

This is an experience being this place
I'm tired of looking at the same face...

But I'm on my way out
And when I get out I'ma shout
To the lord
Man I'm so damn bored!!

Just let me leave
So I can breathe!

-Sharanda, Alameda

From The Beat: They're suffocating the life out of you while you're in jail, so to say, "just let me leave so I can breathe," is right on. If they were to let you leave, how could you prevent coming back? What are some positive things you have to live for? Letting you leave would be nice, but wouldn't it be nicer if they let you stay away in the first place...

. . . if you choose to carry a gun, you'll either end up killing someone or doing life in prison.

suicide

What up, Beat? It's yo' boy wit' the fro, Thirst. What up? Just want to say a few things about my own topic, suicide. It ain't no joke either. Two of my ex-ladies tried to commit suicide. Well, my lady right now, she put a knife to her heart and tried to kill herself. Well, let me tell you about that day.

I was at my lady's house and everything was coo', you know, until I guess I said somethin' wrong, 'cause she went off on me. It was crazy, and all I told her was that I wanted to go to my friend, Tony's, house. She started to hit me, kick me. I got pissed, so I tried to leave, but she ran out of her room before me and went into her kitchen and grabbed a butcher's knife. She was about to stab herself, so I ran up to her and told her not to move, and tried to talk her out of it, and I did.

Once I got the knife away from her, her parents walked in and I had the knife in my hand, so they thought I was trying to do somethin' to her. Her parents were pissed, so I left, and when I got home, she calls me and told me to go back to her house, but I was gonna leave already to Tony's, so I told her, "No," After we hung up, she came to my house and made a scene in front of my house. After that, I still left.

That's it, Beat. Most of my ex-ladies are crazy. Beat, I don't know why they're like that. It's messed up! Well, Beat, I'll write next week. Late. To all the boys in here, stay up!

-Thirst, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If most of your ex-ladies "are crazy" and two of them have tried to commit suicide, we have to wonder whether the way you treat them has anything to do with this. In other words, were they "crazy" before you hooked up with them, or did they get crazy because you hooked up with them? You seem to be saying it's all on them, but experience tells us that when relationships get crazy, it's never all one person.

You Never Hear About It

It's the one and only comin' out of that unit, talking about guns. Well, when I think about that Virginia Tech stuff, I don't really care. Just because the kids died at a college, all of the sudden it is a big deal. People die 32 deep every day. You never hear about it. So although I feel for their families because I know how it feels to lose loved ones. It's not a big deal as what people blow it up as.

I noticed in The Beat when were talking and the guy asked who could get a gun, and damn near everybody raised their hands. Half were probably lying, but I know for a fact it is easy to get guns. I personally have carried guns in the street and I've shot a few more. But holding, or owning, or using a handgun does not make you a man. I have more respect for someone who deals with his problems through a fist fight. I'm not boasting about carrying one and I'm not somebody to lie and say I've shot people, cause I haven't. People think it makes them tough to buck at somebody, but remember that it takes more heart to throw blows and hopefully you win.

The first time I shot a gun was a Beretta nine millimeter, with my step dad in the mountains. He told me to always treat it as if it's loaded and to keep the safety on, until you're about to fire. He taught me how to treat guns with respect and every time I hold on, I focus and I'm careful.

Last of all, I would like to say, that even though I believe a gun doesn't make you a man, I don't think it makes you less of man either. To those who are going before you act.

Much love to all those who serve their time without winning. Also, to all, stay up and focus on your goals. Lates.

-Nick, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We appreciate your honesty. A lot of what you said, is your opinion, but may be true in many ways. Your step dad has taught you to respect a gun and the power that it has. Do you think that a lot of people don't have that same respect for a gun? Does respect for life also play a part in this as well? Maybe the reason why the Virginia Tech Tragedy was publicized the way it was, is because of where it took place and the circumstances behind it? You're right when you mention that a lot of other tragedies, such as that, go unreported. But you must admit, that was very tragic and affected so many different people, on different levels. Do you think that more gun control laws would lessen the chances of this happening again? What's your possible solution to this tragedy, that may keep these tragic events from happening again?

Guns

Hey, what's up? You know who this be, that homeboy, Looney, from Gilroy. Just wanted to say hope all is well and everyone continues to strive to do good and get out.

I chose this topic because I feel it really has a big role in my life and in my 'hood. Honestly, I don't like guns. I rather take it fist-to-fist. But nowadays, everybody is packing. The reason I hate guns so much is because I always had one on me and if I didn't, I felt paranoid and unsafe. It really sucks, because if you choose to carry a gun, you'll either end up killing someone or doing life in prison. If you don't, you could end up getting seriously hurt or killed.

Another reason I hate guns is because me and my homeboy, Anthony, got shot at K-Mart in Gilroy. It was a day that I would never forget 'til this day. That's the reason I wouldn't even consider to stop bangin'. Not that it's a good thing, but it's just hard when someone tries to kill you, especially a rival. But I know a lot of homeboys and down homegirls can relate.

The last and final reasons I hate guns is because that's the reason I'm in here. So do what you do, but just do it smart and think before your actions. But, hey, I'm just living the life of a king.

-Looney, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is so strange, Looney, because when we read what you've written, it convinces us that holding a gun is not in your best interest. But, apparently, your own words don't convince you. You got shot at, and still you want to take your gun in revenge, knowing that it can only end in tragedy, both for the perpetrator and the victim. It may be that a lot of homeboys and homegirls can relate, but then, a lot of the state's 200,000 prison slaves can also relate to the consequences of those choices, and wish they could make you choose differently before you get to where they are.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

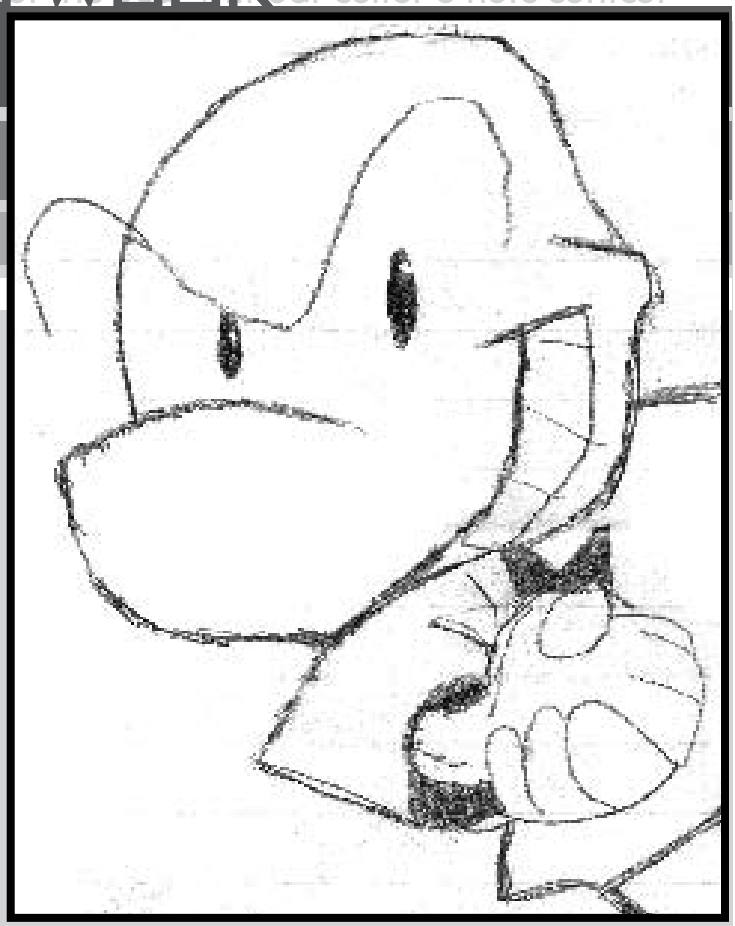
A Close Call

I remember when I was six years old, and my mom and me just got home from San Francisco. When we opened the front door, there was someone standing in the kitchen. So I guess they broke in the house. So my mom told me to go to my room. So I started to go, but instead I hid behind the couch.

My mom went to the person and then the next thing I knew, they had a gun to her head. I remember I started to cry. So then I ran to the phone and called the cops. Then I saw my mom stab the other lady in the arm. My mom got lucky, 'cause the lady pulled the trigger, but it was on safety. So my mom grabbed the gun and then the person turned around and ran. But I was just happy she didn't get shot.

-Mousie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That was a lucky one! She was very lucky. What were they doing there? Were those people enemies of your mother, or were you a random pick for a robbery? That was a good thing you did when calling the cops? What do you think about guns after what almost happened to your mother? Did this experienced help you not to mess with guns?



Grieve

It was 7:00 am in the morning last year. I was getting ready for school. When I was getting out of the shower, all I heard was my grandmother screaming. I asked her what was wrong? What's going on? She wouldn't tell me. She just kept screaming and started to mumble words that I couldn't understand. Then she ran to my mother and started to hug her and cry.

When I finally understood what was going on, I was very sad. I turned out that my uncle was shot three times and he was in the hospital. My mom rushed down there to see if he was alive, but when she got there, it was too late. He was killed instantly.

The next couple of weeks went by slowly for me. I couldn't think straight at school and I really felt like shhh. But after a few more weeks, I started to realize that he will not be coming back physically, but he will always be watching over me and he will be loved and remembered forever. Well, I'm just saying that whatever happens to you or your family, that you should use it as a learning experience.

-Ultra, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We all have to pass from this earth, but to go like that is truly tragic. We will all be remembered for how we lived our lives, so it is nice to know that your uncle will be loved forever. If this was a learning experience for you (as hard as it was), what are the lessons you learned.

It Ain't Supposed To Be Like This

I sit in my cell, pondering on what my future has on hold for me. All I have is dreams that I'm released, but they're broken by the call of the counselors snapping me back into reality. I know many of those young youth are growing tired of this place, wasting your teenage years in a cell. The only contact we get is visits, phone. We watch our young ones grow up by pictures.

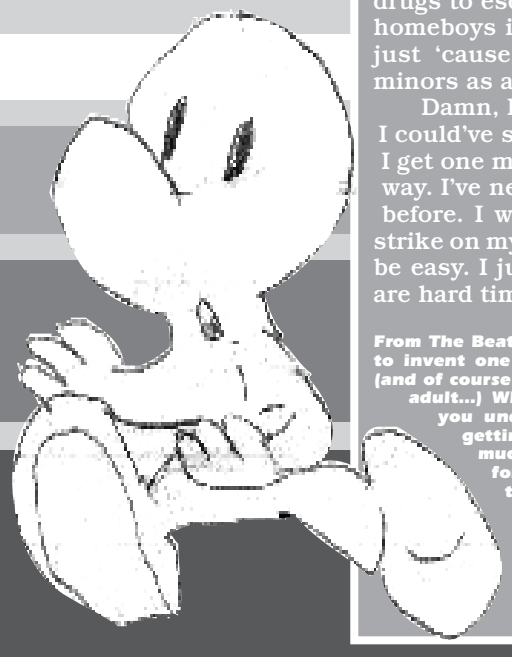
This ain't the way we're supposed to live. Some people think it's normal. That's crazy. Throughout the years of my life, I ignored the advice my loved ones had to offer. Left home and was seeking something. It all started with one drink, one hit, but it's never enough. We seek drugs to escape reality, daily problems. There's so many homeboys in the juvenile facility that are getting years, just 'cause the court system wants to charge young minors as adults. What if it was your son?

Damn, I wish I could turn back the hands of time so I could've spent more time with my family. Damn, I pray I get one more chance, so I could make money the right way. I've never had a job, never filled out an application before. I wish I get a good job when I get out; with a strike on my record, it will be hard. But no one said it will be easy. I just need to keep my head up, because these are hard times.

-Not Eas, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Since you didn't put your name on this piece, we had to invent one for you... Of course it's not supposed to be this way (and of course nobody would want his or her own child charged as an adult...) What makes us hopeful for you about this piece is that you understand that freedom is not paradise, and that just getting out of here is not enough. In many ways, freedom is much harder than lock-up because you become responsible for your own decisions again — and all the consequences that come with them. You're right, it won't be easy. But you're in a place where there are no easy solutions and no easy choices. If you keep doing what led you here, you know the results, which are far from easy. If you make the effort to get a decent job, the effort will prove difficult, but the payoff will make your future so much better. Good luck.

. . . I started to realize that he will not be coming back physically, but he will always be watching over me and he will be loved and remembered forever.



CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Feet Don't Fail Me Now

I ran from police almost monthly or every two to three weeks before I got locked up. I'm hella fast.

So anyways on a Friday in February I had skipped school and had robbed three laptops with my friend and then I had sold them already and I was about to go home when me and my friend robbed a guy for his cash after he took money out the ATM.

The police were right on the street (Telegraph) and they parked and got out the car and attempted to apprehend me. I ran instantly, me and my friend went in opposite directions. This confused them for a second but they split up.

I ran through Cal Campus and cut through the bushes and I was hiding. I didn't see the police but what I didn't know was he had called Cal Campus police and when I started walking I saw a bike police and they started chasing. I ran down this hill and the police had an advantage for a second but I made a smart decision and cut for the side. The police jumped off his bike. I knew it was over 'cause he can't catch me on foot so I ran over the campus and ended up in the hills and by then they must have had no clue where I was.

-Money, Alameda County

From The Beat: That's quite a chase! You must be in great athletic condition to run that fast that far. It sounds like you were getting into a lot of trouble before you got locked up, if you were getting chased every couple of weeks. Robbing somebody when he's getting his hard-earned cash out of the ATM is a cheap shot, and very mean. Maybe he needed that money to buy groceries for his family! Maybe one of the laptops you stole belonged to a struggling student on a scholarship. As you now know, no matter how fast you are, the law eventually catches up. We hope that you are using your time in the hall to catch your breath, collect your thoughts, and plan a new way of life that doesn't involve hurting other people and taking things that don't belong to you. Your actions have consequences.

The Infamous Crackhead

All right, all right. It's my last week here, and I will be writin' in from Walden House PSK. I have heard a lot about my nickname in The Beat. Most people know me, some know about me. Well, for those who don't know me, I'm 17 (soon to be 18... like November), I'm Filipino, and I'm a girl.

Though it is true I'm cute, I'm not ignorant or a crack smoker! The nickname originates from my friends an' fans. I used to act like a crackhead. It used to be joke back in the day, and I just grown on the name. Ever since then, I've used it. Hey, it ain't that offensive. It's just a nickname! It's kinda given me fame, yup, 'cause people go, "Who would call themselves that?" Shhh! I would! It's unique and catch... it got me a lot of biz in the dope game...

But see, now that I'm trying slowly to get out, da nickname I still go by is draggin' me down. So don't be surprised if I'm resignin' it. Just decided to give y'all some lil' background info. For more info, tune in to The Beat Within, next edition. Thank you readers! Ha ha! Laughin' at y'all haters.

-Not For Long Crackhead U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is one of your most informative pieces, NFLC... We are among those who have wondered, "Who would call themselves that?" It's cute until you realize that the fact that it got you "a lot of buz in the dope game" actually wasn't very helpful to you, or to others. We know what you're capable of (and wonder if you know), so we're not happy when we read that you're trying to get out of the game, but slowly. That's a prescription for falling back into old, destructive patterns. Trying to move forward with one foot in one world and one foot in another almost certainly leads to falling on your face! Decide what you want, and then make the firm decision to do what it takes to get it. Don't put off the changes you know you need to make. Don't get into that terrible situation where you wait just one second too late to change, and spend years saying, "If only..." The only other thing we have to say is, we're waiting to see what you're planning to call yourself.

You Are The Love Of My Life

Deep within my soul, where my secrets are kept from even me, sometime I feel feelings that I cannot describe. They're sacred and they're private, and they're all about you and me, my love. They tell our beautiful love story, for you are the love of my life.

Our hearts speak on "Eternal" language of undying devotion and loyalty. No one can ever know this place with me, and I will never find this place with anyone else but you, we are soul mates, lovers, and friends. Forever is the language of our love, and this is our love story.

You show me you love me by your commitment to me. Your action speaks the truth. Your expressions tell me your feelings. You define your love for me by the way you treat me. Our love is not a place we came to and left. We stayed. It is not some things that will go out of style or change in time. We have a sacred trust. You are the love of my life, the one in whom all my dreams and hype and plans are committed.

In our secret place, our private world, we talk about things no one else will ever here. We forgive each other when we break promises, and we start over again. We're on each others side no matter what, and that's where well always be. We don't betray each other's confidence. Time has taught us something well.

I am thankful for this blessed relationship we are together in every way. Our love is not something we will not exchange one another for anyone else. I have faith in our love. Our love doesn't have a "Timeline". It not only shares today and tomorrow but creates destinies forever is the only language our love speaks, and you are the love of my life.

-Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: We would love to hear more about this special love of your life. What makes this relationship work? How does this incarceration effect the two of you?

. . . now that I'm trying slowly to get out, da nickname I still go by is draggin' me down.

My Regrets Are For Not Doing

Usually I believe in "no regrets." I choose to live life rather spontaneously, on top of that, so you would think that I would regret many things. Yes, its true that I don't like the consequences of many of my actions, but everything I've done in my life I wanted to do at one point in time, so I don't believe in regretting doing things I've done. However, there are many things I can say I haven't done that I regret not doing.

There are many things I regret not doing. Mostly when I was younger, because I wasn't as brave then as I am now. I regret not going on certain roller coasters and other rides I had the opportunity to ride then. I regret not telling my crushes how I felt about them. And I regret not living life to the fullest for the first fifteen years of my life. Today I know that living life "safe" isn't really living.

-Lemmings U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire the honest of this piece, and, in truth, believe that many if not most of our regrets are for opportunities lost, chances not taken, doors not opened. But at the same time, we worry about throwing safety to the wind as you live your life. We think there is a balance to be struck between taking those chances you'll only regret not taking, and not taking those chances you'll only regret the consequences of. Of course, each of us must find our own balance, some more daring, some less. We hope you find yours in a way that will let you be bold and daring without, at the same time, risking become a slave, a physically disabled person... or worse.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Guns Get You In Trouble

What it do, Beat? This ya boy Drew, and I want to talk to y'all about guns. Now guns have always been a part of my life. I don't like to talk much about what I do or what I done, but I am gonna say this: guns have gotten me, my family and friends into a lot of trouble.

No, I'm not just talking about getting locked up because I have never been caught with one and I hope I never do. But look at the facts. People don't carry guns for the thrill; they are here to kill. I would carry one, for instance, to protect myself from others who carry them and to protect family or friends.

If I had a choice, guns would be gone. People think they sick 'cause they carry them, but what make you sick is using your fist. Check this for instance: you locked up, you get into it with someone. What you gonna do, run and get the gauge or something? Hell no! Be fo' real. You just got to think about it. Well, I will holla at you next week

-Young Drew U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We would make the same choice to do away with guns if we could, because we read in every issue of The Beat (and every day in the newspaper) the terrible destruction guns bring about, ripping families into tiny pieces. But we don't think Americans will ever part with their guns (and even the Constitution gives us the right to "bear arms." So, all we can do is congratulate you for having the maturity and wisdom to see that your brain is the most powerful weapon you possess. Keep using it!

We're Not Beasts

This new hall ain't nothin' nice. They got us locked down like we some beasts or something. At least the beds is good. The other staff ain't cool, though. They tryin' to show us how the real jail feel like. We got a small ass rec. place.

To keep it real, I wish we was at the old hall. Because this one, they keep us in our room more and we don't even come out for wash-ups no more. That's how bad they think we is. And some people that work here think it's bad for us, 'cause we be locked down.

And some of these staff also like seein' us locked up – but I guess that's the way life is, or the life we chose.

One love gone.

-Lil' Alex, Alameda

From The Beat: "When it rains, the fool complains, the wise man opens an umbrella." We don't know if this statement is true or not, but it does seem like the New Hall is like new weather. You can't control it. You can't control what the counselors say, how the food tastes, what this new rec place looks like... the only thing you can control is how you deal with it. Like you said "That's how bad they think we is." But we know you all have good in you. Your words on the page know you all have good in you. You know you have good in you. And your goal, Alex, as a young man, as a writer, as a person who wants to change, is to pay attention to the people who have faith in you... and live up to that faith. All the physical details of the new hall? That's just rain, let it wash off you and wash away. When the rain is gone, you'll still be here.

Hiding My Emotions

On Oct 31, '05, I had my son in juvenile hall. Sometimes I talk about it and act like it's just something in the past. But deep down inside, every time I talk about it, it feels like something stuck in my throat, like a bunch of bricks done finished falling on my shoulders

I don't know how to feel sometimes. At times I think it was my fault. At times, I sit there and cry because I know it hurts me. But it's like I put a hard shell and cover my emotions on how I really feel.

-Lil' Bipp U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We remember your son being born in the hall, Lil' Bipp, and this is a very sad memory. We hope you don't spend a lot of time thinking about whose fault it was. If you did things during the pregnancy that you should not have done, then let that be a guide to your next pregnancy. Lots of things happen during pregnancy that you have nothing to do with and no control over, so stop beating yourself up. If your son had been born alive, where would he be right now? You are again locked behind four walls, and that should tell you that you are not yet ready to be a parent whose first responsibility is to be with their children, to guide them and provide for them and protect them. First, get yourself together — out of here and on a path toward something better. You still have a lot of time to create a family.

Guns

This ya boy Clappa back again talking about guns. Guns always been detrimental to society, but always been a part of my life. First time I seen a gun, my uncle was in my room cleaning his gun, and he showed me how to hold it. I was only like seven. Moms came in going bad. I thought she was wrong, but now I see she was right about guns and violence. Look where this lifestyle got me.

First time I used a gun is when me and my click went to ride on some of the turfs we were beefing with. But Beat, to tell you the truth, people think they carry a gun but feel less of a man.

-Clappa U2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: To a seven-year-old boy, holding a gun must be irresistible. We wish your uncle had thought more about the future than just about that moment. Now that you are thinking about the future, what changes do you plan to make in your life so that you can feel like a real man, a responsible adult man, and not a child who gives himself the façade of a man by packing a gun?

Play Ball

For me, back in the days I used to get high every day. Drink every day, going to the block out all night, doing the whole thing we do. I cut school. I got fired 'cause I'll go high. I was real bad.

But now I got respect. I was going to school, had a job, close to finishing school, learned a lot doing my thing. I'm gonna go when I graduate to junior college, play basketball, learn math. And for two years from there to State. And best believe I'm going to be the home girl going to college and go to the WNBA 'cause I shone.

Ain't trying to go to the big house. I'm better than this shhh being in this life. So when I get out, I'm going to move forward and succeed in my goals. And when I get out, my first goal is finish school, get a job. and turn my life around. And I'll be the first home girl to take another chance and damn jail, juvi. I'll be the G to do that and best believe y'all would see me on TV playing ball.

-Lucero U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We sure hope you accomplish everything you've set out for yourself to do. The most important element of your plan, though, isn't the WNBA part of it, it's the "finishing school" and going to college part of it. That opens up doors you can't even imagine yet, and may lead you in exciting directions that you can't know about until you open those doors. Don't give up on this dream. It's not only a good one, it's one that you can make come true!

Peace Through Violence

Is it possible to increase the peace? I think it's messed up how we don't really learn how to, and don't want to stop the violence until we lose someone. Some people don't even learn until after that. They still want to go shoot and kill the ones that have made them mourn.

Well, after I lost my god sister this past March, I learned a lot! RIP God Sis Queen Nisha! I know we can improve our behaviors! You know, most people that shoot are trying to earn respect! But think about how much respect you loose when you shoot the wrong person! The lesson here is treat others as you want to be treated.

Sunrise: 7/12/89; Sunset: 3/16/07. RIP Antwanisha Geneva Pamela Morgan.

-Lil' Ill Will U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a very thoughtful piece, and we're sorry that it took the loss of your God sister to learn these important lessons. Even when someone shoots "the right person" (meaning the person they wanted to shoot), it still leaves their innocent loved ones to pick up the pieces of their lives. Those who die on our streets quickly lose their fame, but those left behind — shattered families — are permanently affected.

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

My Life

As days go by, all I wonder is why do I have to be away from home? I mean, I know I did my dirt and shhh, but I've been in PSK and found out that it's closing, and I'm tripping, like what's goin' to happen? My mom has to talk to my PO about what's going to happen to me, and how this place is closing down so fast. So now they have to see where they're going to put me, or where I'm going. Really, I'm hoping I'm going home, but I don't think that's going to happen because of my background. I've been locked up too long, and I'm hoping they will cut me some times.

Plus, I need to go home and help my mom, because she is having my baby brother next month and shhh. But I don't know, because there's so much shhh going on that needs to be done, and I need to be there to help out. I'm just going to wait until I hear from my mom. But I say my life chose me.

What can I say? I live that gangster life and choose it. But what can I say? My mom is an OG and my father... just like they say, "Don't stop, won't stop."

But I wrote this little letter to ask myself what do I need to do so I can finish and get the hell out this place. And when I look back, I can stay to myself I did it, and tell my brothers and sister that I did it for them and for my mom and dad and grandma. But what can I say? I'm trying to show my family that I can do it for me and not for others. I'm just trying to show my brother who's in j-hall that if I can do it, so can he, because it's time to do what you got to do and stop playing games, because he wants to act grown and get tattoos and shhh. But all I can do is pray for him and just wish he can do better instead of following in my footsteps, and just do right and not bad. But like I said, I can just pray for him and others. But, well, I'm going to end my little story, but until paper meets pen, I'll be back.

Well, today we went out and went to some art thing, but some girls wanted to come back, like me, because there was nothing to do, so we left and came back, because I miss this place. Yeah, right. I just wanted to come and write about today and my lifestyle, but for today, I'm hoping it will be a good day, because I'm supposed to get a visit from my family and my mentor is supposed to come, too, but I don't know, but the only thing I can do is hope. Well, today I'm hoping everything will be okay. Well, I don't know, but I'm missing my lil' brother, but the only thing I can do is pray for him and my family and my dad, but as you can see, I don't really talk about him because in my eyes, I don't see him in my life, because he did his dirt, so I guess it's payback and I guess it's my way of saying, "Look what I became and my brother and now look where we are at! Still in the system," locked up for what my dad put us through. We're following his footsteps because look where he's at now, locked up just like his kids. To me, I think it's funny, because his ass needs to be a dad and do what needs to be done. I can help my mom out with my brothers and sister, and look, my mom is having a baby from somebody else, because me and my brothers and sister are from my dad, but this baby is not my dad's. But it's okay, because I'll love it like my brother. But I'm trying to be happy for what I got, because that's what my mom taught me to do.

Well, what my mom told me is to never be a follower and to always be a leader, but what can I say? I get it from my mom, but I guess I had a good day today, because my mom came and made my day, and I got to see my sister and my mentor and it was cool. We took pictures and I had fun, even if it was just them.

Well, I'm missing my family now because they left, but it's okay, because they will come see me next week and I'm going on my first pass, so I'm okay. Plus, I'm happy because I'm going to get my nails done and go play games. I think it will be fun because I really don't do that on the outs, so I'll have fun even if it's with my mentor. I find fun because I've been locked up and we never really got to do those kind of things, because I got here when I was locked up, so I've been here for, like, going on a year. It's cool, because I don't think I will never talk to her like I do now, because now that I know her, I don't really have to worry if she is going to like me, because she is just like me. She never did drugs, only drink, so that's not really a bad thing.

Well, also, I'm afraid of me not going home, but I'm hoping I get to go home, because now my mom told me she is due any time and my brother is leaving in two weeks to the Ranch. I'm just praying that my mom comes and sees me and him, but him more, because he needs it more than I do now, but I don't mind. I mean, I do, but he needs more, too, but I hope that she sees him, too, but that's all I got on my mind.

-Your Girl From San Jose, Santa Clara

From The Beat: "They" may say "don't stop, won't stop" but don't YOU say it. You can make whatever choices you want to make, and if you want to make the same choices you've made in the past, then you'd be a fool to expect different results. So, what's it going to be? You can do more for your little brother than pray for him. You can also get your own life back on track and give him an example to follow — not with your words but with your life and the way you live it. There is a lot of information in this piece, some hopeful and some not. But we still come back to the central point: whatever happens to your brother, whatever happens at home, you still have a responsibility to yourself to stay sober, keep a clear head, get all the education you can, and only do those things that you wouldn't mind your young siblings following your example. If you do all that, you'll be on your way to a decent life in freedom.

The Gun Controversy

Guns is a big issue. I mean it's controversial. It has been for years. Some people believe in the right to bear arms. Some hate it and go against it.

Me? Well, what can I say? I grew up wit' no father figure, so protection came from the streets, including guns.

Guns take a big part in people's lives (most people in poverty) in good and bad ways. I used to be so into guns that I got it tatted on my back. I used to want to be a gunsmith, but guns take a big part in violence, so why continue the cycle?

I'm now tryna cover the .25 semi-automatic gun on my back wit something else.

-Crackhead U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you grow up around guns, it must seem like the most natural thing in the world to want one. We're not surprised that when you were a child, you had one tatted on your back. But this piece (and most of your pieces) prove that you are no longer a child, and that's the thing that gives us confidence that you won't fall victim to such foolishness as gunplay. We don't care whether you have a gun tatted on your back or not — as long as you don't have one in your hands!

It Takes So Much More

Most people think that it makes you strong and hard to keep your guards up and feelings hidden. But to me, it takes so much more courage, strength, heartache and pain to be vulnerable and put your true self out there for grabs.

Have you ever heard the saying that says, "Nothing good in life comes easy?" Well for me, that means when you do what's comfortable, or what you're used to doing, it shows that you don't have the ummff to take a risk. When you be your true self and you are not in denial about it, then you are taking the risk of being rejected. And when you are in the habit of guarding yourself to not get rejected, than it's that much more.

-Bobbi, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You're right about what you've shared and it sounds like you're sharing from experience. Even when putting yourself out there backfires, we think it's worth the risk. How did you move from the self-protective mode you were in to the vulnerable emotional risk-taker you've become? Do you have a role model for the courageous person you describe, or are you your own role model? We appreciate you putting yourself out there and sharing this with us all.

My Family Fell Apart When My Mom Died

If I can make a call to somebody in the afterlife, I would call my mother and tell her about the things that changed when she left. My mom left her children and her grandkids and her family. In my life, things changed because I would always stay with her, and now I have to stay with my dad.

My dad and I used to be starving and didn't have any new clothes. I had to sleep on a mattress that my dad found. When I was living with my mom, I had everything and with my brother, I would, too. We told our dad that he left two younger and an older brother behind and they needed him to keep them straight and to show them (how) to become a man. I need him, because he was a role model in my life and he was very inspiring to me, and I needed Mike to show me the way to go in life. For my mom, my family fell apart when she left. I love you.

-Penny, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We're not sure of your current situation. Are you living with your dad? What about your other brothers? It's tragic that you lost your mother so young. We hope you are able to navigate this difficult time in your life, and that you will be able to honor her memory by moving forward with your life in a positive way.

Five Years Ago, Five Years From Now

Five years ago I was 12 and jumping headfirst into the world of addiction. It's crazy to me because it started off as smokin' a bowl of weed and a cigarette, every once in a blue moon. Two years into it, I was already smokin' tons of weed, doing cocaine, "experimenting" with mushrooms/acid, drinking and starting to do meth. I look at my little brother who just turned 15 and thank God he isn't anywhere near where I was at that age.

Five years from now I will be 23 years old, and I will be in college, have my own apartment, my own car and be a grateful addict in recovery, with a little more than five years clean. I want to be going to UCSC (University of California Santa Cruz) and hanging out with my family.

Also, I hope that by then my Dad and me are hanging out and have worked through some of our rough times.

-Angel Kissez, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: You've been through a lot and we're sure you have learned a lot. What is your step-by-step five-year plan to achieve what you've set out to achieve? What do you want to study in college? How do you reestablish a dialogue and relationship with your father? Do you think it may be easier to work through as you accomplish some of the things you want for yourself? If you run into roadblocks that prevent you fro accomplishing all you want to do in the time you've given yourself to do it, what are the strengths you can draw on to get past the frustrations? We see you succeeding and becoming the person you are clearly already becoming, and we wish you good luck.

Trials And Tribulations

I'm in here goin' through trials and tribulations. Things is bad for me at the moment, facin' things I never thought will come stressin' daily. Got all these problems at one time... and I don't know how I'm making it, but I am. I got loved ones dyin' on the outs guts to go through everything in a box. Holdin' on stayin' so strong so young but getting treated like an animal. In adult eyes, I'm a child, but I'm a child facin' adult time.

But why? Cause of what they say I did or what they think I did. I'm so strong I'm not letting these things bread, 'cause I'm gon' succeed in everything. I try not gon' get broken.

-Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: The words you write up here make us wonder if one day you should be a lawyer, or a youth advocate. Because you hit on exactly the biggest paradox of the justice system. If the law continues to see you as a child, how can they convict you as an adult? We wish we had an answer for you... we wish we could change the system for you, so that you could serve out the time for your 16 year old's crime in a 16 year old's sentence, but we can't. All we can do is tell you what you already know: Stay strong, stay positive, remember that the system decides your sentence, but only YOU decide how you serve it out. Peace.

That OG That Made It Out The 'Hood

Well, I got a big homie that today is very positive! He been in prison with two strikes, and the next time he go to prison he goes for life! Which will not happen because he is in college today doing very well! So every time I feel like giving up, I think about him and how much he been through.

-EJ U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: This is a truly inspirational story, EJ. We hope your friend continues his impressive progress toward a better life — and that his example serves as your role model.

My Love For You

A summer is beautiful
but it's not enough
to satisfy
emotions
that are shared between us.
A winter love is cozy
but I need so much more.
To intensify our love
that it endures.
Every time I close my eyes I think of you
no matter what the seasons are
I still love you with all my heart,
I wanna be wherever you are
to kiss you passionately and hug you tight
I only think of you on two occasions and that's day and night.

-Jesus Coleon, Alameda

From The Beat: Jesus Coleon you have the soul and gifts to be so much more than a detainee stuck. Wake up homie and stop wasting your time living the life of the incarcerated! What will it take? How bad do you want this love of your life? Will she wait for you this time round? Continue to share your gifts and work your butt off to be something more than the young person that came into the system!

Forgive Me

Sittin' in this cell Another day in deep thoughts
Thinking and reminiscing
How I should've used
What I was taught
Asking for second over
For god's sweet mercy
Thoughts in the back of
My mind saying
I'm Not really worthy
All I really wanna do Is get a release
So I can get on with
Life but not go back
To the streets
Asking time and time again
"Why am I still in here" if the man upstairs knew my heart and see that I'm truly sincere
Once I heard a wise man
Say "everything happens for a reason"
Wondering to myself when all
The light come along with my season
To me it seems like the day that I'm free He really has forgiven me

-Lil' Tonio, Alameda

From The Beat: It may be hard to believe right now, but the day you get free is when these tests really begin. Every demon that ever tempted you will be calling to you when you get out — and on any day, when you should be in school, you could be rolling dice. When you should be home sleeping, you could be out in the deadly night, getting in trouble. So the secret is to avoid the should/could struggle, and say what do you really WANT to be doing. Meaning, what do you want from the bottom of your heart, from the bottom of your soul, from way down deep inside the Lil Tonio that wrote this poem? And once you know what you truly want, how will you find the people who can help you stay on track while you chase it?

CO-PIECES OF THE WEEK

Open Minded Speak

The journey through my mind
Stop talkin' 'cause I'm one of a kind
Decided to be a man, than a baby that's new to the game
Many inspired to call my name
Success is that power that floats around my thoughts
Another experience than a crook that's stupid and got caught
Running into mistakes that's gon' be bad like me
Only thing going through my head is change, I be.

Mistakes can be a lesson to make you change.
You can change or let your mistakes remain.
Movin' forward to get to your goals and live life right
And if you move your life forward than everything will be bright.
Thinking of another way to live life so I can stay free.
Inspired by the time the judge gave me
I'd rather be home with my son but I gotta do my time.
But remember Lil' Papa is top of the line.

-Lil' Papa, Alameda

From The Beat: In all the days we've run The Beat, this is the first time we've ever had someone write about being "inspired" by their sentencing. But it doesn't surprise us that it should come from you. You were on the right path for a long time, and then you suffered a tragedy and fell off that path, but now, even in the terrible place you are in now physically, you write like someone who has found his path mentally. It's as if that sentence, usually such a curse, helped you see clearly to what you want: Your girl, your son, your future. Do you think it's possible that in the right hands, a jail sentence can be turned into a positive thing?

RIP Ruben

What it do Beat?. If I had one phone call to heaven I would call my lil' nephew Ruben, who got hit by a train when he was only 11 years old. I would tell him "we all miss you , and you'll never be gorgotten, we'll always miss you, and you'll always be in our hearts and save a spot up there for me, homie."

We bought him a Mac Dre mask for Halloween and he was too happy , but what makes me sad is that he didn't get to wear it, 'cause God took him away from us.

The last memory I have of my nephew is me and the homeboys were posted in front of his house, sippin' brews and his moms, came out of the house, yellin' at us 'cause she found a shank, a flag with colors, and a broken clip in his piocket while he was in the shower. We all laughed together because he was like all of us when we were all young.

-Scarface, Alameda

From The Beat: Thank you for honoring your young nephew in our pages. There are two tragedies in this piece you write. The first is of course the loss of your nephew, who deserved many more Halloweens. But the other is that you and your other homies start so young on a path that invariably leads -- well, you know where it leaves. I can see how you all would have thought it was funny at the time, but it seems like you and your homies take these early steps torwards a dead end street, getting caught up so young. Ruben was still innocent, but he was just on the verge of osing that innocence, mostly because of how much he looked up to all of you. Do you ever wonder if where your innocence went?

Why Is My Life Killed With So Many Lies?

It's to the point where they just can't be denied
Ninja's tellin' me this fools tellin' me that
Givin' me advice like they ass is on crack
I don't listen to nobody, why should I listen to you?
I'm a bossy ass chick, man that's what it do
You know me,
My name is Berta Lee!

-Berta Lee, Alameda

From The Beat: It sucks when people give you advice without really understanding what you're going through or what the circumstances are. On the other hand, sometimes that advice is good advice in its own right (Example, if my enemy shouts "Don't jump off that building!", I'd be stupid not to listen to him, because it's still good advice)... so give us some examples of what people are telling you, and why you are (or aren't) paying attention.

My Life

In my life I learned a lot of things, one I learned is where ever you goin' whatever you doing there's always someone there to meet you to put you down or to mess you up. When you're doing good there's someone trying to throw you off someway.

Right now in my life I have so much grief but always wanted to live abundantly. I pray so God could purge these things in my life and I'm still prayin'. I get neglected a lot but so what because I'm an in frangible person.

When people talk they underestimate me not knowing I'm nimble. Some people think I a soluble person not knowin' I'm solid as a rock. a

Now my challenge is to over come my obstacles close my mouth just listen and abide in God, and overcome people that's standin' in my way. I don't lament, I just hold my head up tall preparing myself for the worst in hoping for the best.

There one more thing I hate is when people doubt me not know mine is an accelerator.

-Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: Excellent contribution. You have nothing to prove to anybody accept yourself. Allow your actions to speak for themselves!

I Want My Lids Open

Losing things
People leaving my side
Feels like they stole my wings
And they want me believing there's no guide
Why can't they just understand
That I want a life, too?
And I want my lids open
That they aren't the only ones living in this land
That I want a wife and kids, not doping
And my girl will never know...

-Potter, Marin

From The Beat: Very interesting poem, Potter. Whom are you writing this to or about, your enemies? Who stole your wings? Who wants you to believe there's no guide? Who believes they're the only ones living on this land? Why don't you write another piece for The Beat about your right to live on this land in peace, and about whatever or whoever guides you through this life?

I'm Tired...

I'm tired of sitting in this room. Just tired of having to take a shower with another man by my side. Tired of eating this food that some wanna be chef paints every day. Just tired of seeing these same azz faces every day. Just tired of wearing a pair of drawers that another thousand ninjas already wore.

Tired of getting only one hour of rec to be outside on the weekend, and only thirty minutes on Mondays and Fridays. Just tired of wishing somebody would visit me on Wednesday, Saturday or Sunday. just tired of ninjas thinking they tuff, knowin' they suckas. Just tired of praying but getting no answers. Just tired of going to court to some man that don't know me or my personality but only my name and record. Just tired of these nasty ass county snacks. The only thing that I would never get tired of is large muscles. But everything else, I'm just tired of -- period.

-Ray Ray, Alameda

From The Beat: So you wrote this when you were still in Max 4, but now you've moved up the hill to camp. This was like a "Maximum Security Blues", we could almost hear a guitar in the background while we read it. But now, you're up in camp. You've got a lot of advantages now, between programs and the right to move around and just the feeling of being outside more, and finally there will be those home visits, but there's also more room for drama, home stress, and the temptation to run. What kind of music, or words, go with the way you feel up here?

What I Regret Doing And Not Doing

What I regret doing and not doing—I have something for both.
I regret ever claiming sides for gangs.
I regret hitting my sister.
I regret ever doing drugs.
I regret hurting people.
The thing I regret not doing is not going to school, not going home,
not listening to the people who told me to stop drugs, and I ignore them.
'Cause of that I ended up in here.

-Jose

From The Beat: Can you stay this real when you're on the outs again and do everything you mention in this piece? Leave drugs alone, go back to school, get your education and a good job, and help your family? We hope so.

When I'm Always Sad

When I'm always sad, I always talk to my dad and he always make me happy—just talk, he makes me feel better.

-Dony

From The Beat: How wonderful that your dad knows how to be so there for you. You'll probably absorb from him how to console and council youngsters, so when you have kids, you'll be a great father, too. When your father isn't there, like when you're in juvy, can you imagine what he'd say or do to help you feel better, and tell yourself something similar, so you can heal yourself when you have to?

Why?

Coming home from school, pre-school
I remember the building was cracking as we drove up the hill
"I got five on it," was slappin'
And grown-ups was drinkin', smokin'
The day quickly went to night
The night was black
The party was still yakkin'
Until "Pop pop pop pop pop pop pop"
The gunshots rained out
"Get down," was the last words I heard
We came outside
Blood dripped like rain form the sky
Why my cousin, Buff Ron, had to die?

-Jordan

From The Beat: A really terrific poem, although and especially because it's so totally sad and tragic. Okay, you were there, so why did he die? Could you consider his murder a "warning call" to yourself? What have you changed in your own life, because your cousin died? It wasn't you who was gunned down that night, but it could have been, right? Do you need to radically alter your life to keep yourself alive? If so, do you have the courage and strength to do it?

RIP

To Meech! Demetrius, my brother from another. I knew this man since I was six. We used to always post in front of my auntie' house, chop it up, turf dance, the whole nine yards! But I guess God needed him more than them streets. Rest in peace, Demetrius! On March 30th, 2005, a shooting was occurred around 6:30 in front of a store. They say it was drug related! A 16-year-old was shot in the head.

-Omari

From The Beat: You have our hearts for your homie's. What does killing anyone ever solve? How else can disagreements over money, drugs, whatever, be resolved other than threatening, hurting or murdering someone?

The Unseen

The last time I saw you, you were up at the mall
I seen you late at night when the going goes rough
I heard you when you were crying
I knew you when you were fresh
I went to you when I was feeling down
How happy I was when the going went south
How in the depths I was when the phone lines went out
How ecstatic I was when reading about my boy
When it was cold, you made it hot
When it was freezing, you made it intensively unseen
When you make it happening, I remembered the days
When she had it taken, I was there the whole time

-John

From The Beat: Very provocative, impressionistic poem, John, but what does it mean? Who are you writing it to/about? A girl? What does "the going went south" mean? Why were you ecstatic when you were reading about your boy? What is "intensively unseen"?

Just To Hug My Daughter Tight

I wish I would get a chance
I know people be saying
"You're just a mice"
If I got out of juvy
I'll be so happy that I'll see my daughter
I do right
Just to hug my daughter tight
I would change my life
'Cause I know deep down this ain't right
I love my gurlfriend
I love my daughter
Hopefully I get out and see them
And make my life positive
And live happy with them
Knowing I'm locked up
Makes me sad
I just want another chance
And I'll do the best for me
They can't see
W'at this is doing to me
I love my baby's mother
And she loves me back
That's what makes me happy
Every day I get up in the morning

-Oscar

From The Beat: Becoming a father can radically change your life. It can be so overwhelming and scary that you (or any youth) may deliberately sabotage your life by messing up and getting arrested, or it can help you grow up and accept the responsibility of your lady and baby, and get rid of any nonsense in your life. When you were free and already a father, why did you mess up then? While you're in juvy, we hope you think about your new family and figure out how you're going to create a plan for all of you, so you can get your education, get a job, and keep your family together! Great luck to you!

Violence In The World

Violence in the world
Children dyin'
Many cryin'
Police lyin'
Birds flyin'
When people get killed
Everybody shhh

-Lil' Super

From The Beat: Good poem. Can you write The Beat another piece or another poem about what's creating all the violence that's causing children to die, families and friends to cry, etc, especially as it goes down in your community? What have you personally experienced of that violence? What can anybody, including your readers, us at The Beat, and/or you, do about it, do you think?

The Lord

Lord, forgive me for my sins & all my evil ways
I give you my mind, my soul & my praise
Satan is the enemy so open your eyes
Read the Holy Bible, gain knowledge & get wise
The Lord is our savior and the devil is a beast
He tries to tear your life up little piece by piece
Now let me speak some truth about God's game
You don't have to live this hell that you live add day
Just repent your sins and He'll wash them away
Be faithful to the Lord and He wont go astray
See Jesus died on the cross for our sins
But now He's resurrected, can I get an amen?
Lord please I'm in need, I see greed
Tired of the pain and the struggles in the streets
At the rate its going dead bodies no one left
Satan's sweeping over lost souls causing death
I don't want to go Lord, I don't want to lie
I'm on my knees, begging please why why why
I read Psalm 23 when I'm lonely inside
'Cause my Lord takes away pain and gives me pride
So Lord I'll never drift away from your wings
Even is the devils hip strike and it stings. AMEN

-Piglit

From The Beat: Beautiful! Your faith and being a God's messenger will grant you your way to God's paradise. Don't lose your faith in God and let yourself be guide by His words. Thank you for delivering such as message and we hope this open the eyes of many in here who have forgotten who God is. Thank you! Keep praying and teaching His words. Someday you'll be gifted for your actions.

Guns

Guns—we don't like to use 'em
Unless our enemies choose 'em
We use our hands
'Cause our hands is what we love using
Shootin' a gun
Who the hell is you foolin'?
I'm a cutthroat
We don't need no guns
Rest in peace to everyone's loved ones
Who died from a gun
(This uso. I gone. A'ight, Beat)
Fa'a soi fua

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: We admire the fact that your "weapon of choice" is your fist and not your gun. On the other hand, we believe that the very fact that you may be in possession of a gun can lead you to take foolish chances, or to think of yourself as more protected than you really are. What do you think Jesus meant when he said (in the Sermon on the Mount) that the meek shall inherit the earth? Who are the meek?

Opinion On Guns

In my choice of what and how guns should be handle, honestly I don't think it's a problem unless those that have guns make it a problem. If people were in their right state of mind to know not to use guns for shooting people just because they mad and or hurt. If you can control yourself, it wouldn't be such a problem.

Basically it depends on the person. Maybe if they work hard as they fight to get gas in Iraq and put towards more important things like focus on those that purchase guns, they most likely make a difference in those thoughts.

-Top Boss

From The Beat: Good thinking! That could be a good solution! Maybe you can make a difference by getting a good education and trying to make a change in this life in making guns purchases more complicated to obtain. Wouldn't that be a good idea!

Guns In This Life

There's a crazy thing about guns in this life.
They could be your Savior of your death,
your protector to survive,
it could help you get money,
hit licks or take lives.
It's crazy why we struggle to survive,
walking with a strap on our waist
'cause we're living to die.
I don't know what's gonna happen
- who, what, when, where, or why,
but it's a deadly world,
guns are just another obstacle of life.

-P

From The Beat: What you said makes sense, but you're wrong in one thing. We are born to die and that's a fact. But before dying, there's a life – hopefully a long life, and we all have the right to live. How we decide to live is our choice and for others the problem. As for yourself, stay away from guns, gangs, and conflicts to have a long-lasting life full of different and beautiful things you've seen and experience.

Peace Through Violence

From my perspective, I think there could be peace through violence, or not. Let's say, like, if you know someone that's affiliated with a gang who gets shot in the head right in front of you, some people will be like, "I'm staying away from this and be peaceful with everyone. That's not the drama I want to see or go through in life and I just want peace." Or when that happens to some other people, they be like, "Oh, I see all this violence, but I don't care—I'm going to keep this violence going."

So there's a lot of people out there with a lot of different perspectives. That's all I could think of, Beat. A'ight, then, lates. To all the guys and Viet boys in J-hall, keep it safe and "Peace."

-Unknown Vietboi

From The Beat: Some people might be scared enough by the violence they experience that they commit to a life of peace, but our experience tells us that most people raised in violence return that violence. Why do you think the U.S. is one of the most violent countries in the world? Do you think the international violence we're undertaking in Iraq and Afghanistan contributes to the violence we see on the streets every day? Have you been the victim of violence? Have you been the cause?

Gone

I've lost a lot of people in my life, but one recently has affected me quite a bit. I was living down in LA at the time, but my homie was living up here in San Jose. I guess he was over at our buddy's house, smoking, having a good time, and it was getting pretty late on Monday, a school day, so I guess he wanted to go home.

It was around 7:30 pm, and he had his brand new Jetta. He always pushed it in his new car. He was driving about 65 MPH on a 25 or 30 MPH road. He lost control and hit a tree. When he hit the tree, his car flipped and slid on the roof. His car slid across the road and hit a wooden fence. He wouldn't have died, but one of the fence poles went through the windshield and pierced through his neck and he was killed instantly.

I got a phone call that night from my brother, saying my homie died. And all of a sudden, one of my best friends was gone.

-Gmp

From The Beat: This is both a tragic piece, and an instructive one. As you can see, this week we have the topic of "carelessness," which is what you've written about here — the tragic and unexpected consequences that can come in a split-second of carelessness. We're sorry your friend lost his life so young. Did his death make you want to change anything about your own willingness to take chances? Have you ever been careless in a way that either led to disaster or might have led to disaster? Why do you think people take such foolish chances with their own lives, not to mention the lives of others?

Gun Guns Guns

Guns were made for one thing, to destroy things or people. Some people need them just to live another day.
Some need them to defend our country.
How will they be without guns?
Guns can be our friend or our enemy.
Some people live by the gun and die by the gun.
Guns don't kill people, people kill people.

-Paul

From The Beat: If you can give a speech to teach people not to use guns what would you say that can convince them that guns aren't good?

Grandfather

Grandpa, why did you leave this way
I just miss you more and more every day
I see your soul soaring through the Bay
And I hope you're comfortable where you lay
We tried our best to support you
And everything you said sounded true
We loved to hear your stories
They sounded so glorious
The spot on the sofa is empty
But full of love

Losing my grandpa two years ago was very hard to overcome. Everyone at home misses him very much and got love for him. It wasn't easy to lose him, but it was time for him to go, I guess... I hope he is happy where he rests.

-Grandson

From The Beat: Without a name, we had to create one for you... This is a touching tribute to your grandpa, and we're sure he knew how much you loved him when he was alive. At least he lived a full life the way he was intended to do. What did you learn from him that will help you be a better father and grandfather?

My Pain, My Thoughts

It's your girl Looney coming at you from this wacked unit. It's all good, 'cause I'll be out next week, on Thursday the 26th, yeah boy.

I'm goona write on this grieve topic. I lost my dad when I was very young. Losing my dad was a big part of my life. I straight went down hill. I straight hit the floor "hard."

I thought my whole world was to an end. I didn't give a damn about anyone and a thing. I still, to this day, think that if my pops didn't die that day, I would not be here in Juvie and I probably still be a Lesbian without my "baby girl" but stuff happens for a reason and I can't change a thing.

I used to not want to talk to anyone, but my dad. It would just lead to getting more mad and frustrated to ending up making a foo' of myself like going to chill with my boys.

My best friend Angel used to be there for me always. I love that girl to death. I used to stay up all night crying as I told her all about my dad. She's my best friend and to this day, her love is much appreciated. I also can talk to my lady "Rachel" about everything too. But yeah I gots to go so with all that said stay up homeboys and girls. I'm out, lates.

-Looney

From The Beat: We're sorry for your loss! We know how hard it is to loose someone very important in out lives, but we also have to overcome this loss because life continues. Don't take his death as an excuse to throw your life away. If he were here, he wouldn't want you to be in this place. You still have friends and people who want the best for you and are willing to support you emotionally at all times. We understand your pain, but you need to start looking for what's best for you.

Problem With Guns

Life's restless
Brotha's getting reckless
Pulling out guns and things is getting hectic
Man made guns but the government shouldn't have it
Man made it happen
Adults first started cappin
Now lil' brotha's come to start smackin'
"Snap"
Start snappin' back to reality
Our minds is failing
Like it's frailty
When you get smacked there ain't no immortality
Brotha's think they can move out like Osama
Killin' instant like anthrax
Seems like it works like that
But lil' do brotha's know that they too get's smacked
Other foo's trying to be generals
Trying to earn their stripes intact
With techs and mags
It shouldn't be like that
Guns should be use for self-defense not for smackin' brotha's
Why don't you just start knuckling up youngsta's
And stop being frontas
You ain't hard
Rollin' out poppin' foo's from your car
Brothas I'm gonna pull your card
If you got gats
That means you're gonna smack
Which you can't really crack foo's
Got shanks and you come attack foo's
Which means in truth you foo's is weak and can't bank foo's
Pullin' out the automatic just to dank foo's.

-R

From The Beat: Guns have totally changed our environment, but most importantly the people in our environment. How can things change? Do you think that a lot of the young people nowadays have little value, or respect for life? Why is that? You're a young man, much like those around you, but yet your mind frame is different from the majority with respects to guns. Why is that? What's different about you if you were compared to the rest? Do you think you can pass on your knowledge and get the troops needed to get your consciousness across? It's refreshing to see and hear a mature perspective from a young man who's in the same predicament as the rest. But yet looks at things from another perspective. Thank you for choosing to be a different type of general.

My First Time

The first time I held I was at my house. We were just kicking back, smoking some weed and my boy gets up and goes to his room. When he comes back out, he has a big bag and he asked me if I wanted to see a dead baby. I though he was playing so I said ok. The next thing I know he pulls out a 12 gauge pump, an SLS and a .357 magnum. He said that it was the dead body, but I knew he was playing. We both started to laugh and I asked him I if I could hold the 12 gauge. He gives it to me and I asked him where he got them from? He just said EPA.

That was the first time I saw a gun, but would not be the last. I would never shoot someone, or even buy a gun, unless I felt my life was threatened. To me, people should go about it the old way and just fight with their hands and not guns. I would feel a lot safer if guns were not in our community.

-Jd

From The Beat: Interesting thoughts and thank you for sharing. If guns were not in your community and that made you feel safer, then how would you go about tackling that problem? Do you think that you'd need help on a bigger level, or would it start with you and those you surround yourself with? Are there others you know that may feel the same way? We'd like to think that you're not the only one to feel that way. Your safety and how you feel in your community should be made known to those who are suppose to serve and protect. But you can't do much from your current circumstance. So, to get anything done, you have to be in a position to make something happen.

Peace Through Violence

If it was possible to teach peace through violence, wouldn't you think that there would be a lot less amount of people who commit these violent crimes? The crimes would have stopped a long time ago 'til the present day?

I have two different solutions to this argument, and I say yes and no. I think some people but not most can learn peace through violence by a terrified situation that could have happened, that the person witnessed or might of done.

The only solution I have for those people that learned peace is that these people dress up every Sunday and go to church, or just committed one day to themselves that they are done committing violence acts and just want to stop with what they are doing.

For solution two: for the people who don't consider peace through violence, I think these are people who don't give a damn about life and are stuck in this state of mind, that are addicted to violent acts. For example: these are people who get put into incarceration and choose this lifestyle.

I think if you could teach peace through violence, it is to have counselors or mentors to tell people to stop these acts and just stop and live a long and happy life, instead of a criminal life.

-Rt

From The Beat: Basically, what you're saying is that some people stop being violent when they're exposed to its deadly results, and others are just made more violent. Which category do you fit in? We definitely agree with you that if violence was an effective way to peace, then there'd be a lot more peace! Do you think it would be useful to teach peace making in school?

Oh Them Guns

Hey, what's up, Beat? This is Mono. Today I'm gonna write about "guns". Do you think guns are bad or good? I think they're both. I think guns are good because when something happens to your loved ones and they get hurt, the first thing you're gonna want to do is hurt, or possibly, kill the person, but that's when bad comes in: You kill the guy, then end up doing life, or a lot of years. Then in the end, you ask yourself, was it worth it?

-Mono

From the Beat: And the final answer to your questions is: NO! By killing someone else, two lives are lost: The person who got killed and the person who committed the act? We know losing a loved one is painful, but losing two loved ones (one to an unpredictable event, another to something that could have been prevented) will devastate any family. Getting revenge doesn't solve problems; it makes them worse?

Something To Grieve On!

What's crackin', Beat? It's Nok' comin' at you from the max unit. Tonight, I'm gonna write about something to grieve on! I dedicate this piece to all that have passed to street violence. When I lost my homie Daniel Motta, it took me a while to get over it, but then I realized than that's just the way of life and everybody has to go at some time.

He isn't the only person that ever passed on me, but I was just thinking that it wasn't his time to g, but I guess it was. I know he's lookin' down on me right now, blowin' hella trees for me with all the other homies that passed and done gone to heaven.

So, I'd like to dedicate this piece to them and RIP to all. I know they are better off now where they're at, so to all those who have lost closed loved ones, just know they're are in a much better place now.

-NokOne

From the Beat: We hope that the loss of your homies and especially the loss of your family members, has taught you that losing one's life over a set, 'hood, or block, is never going to be worth nothing but tears and broken hearts.

Grievin'

When my cousin died,
That hurt the most
Couldn't go to his funeral
'Cause I know I would explode
I'm sheddin' so many tears
Fo' my loved one
I want to let you know,
That I got ya' son
That made me mad when you died
Didn't nobody want to do no dirt,
But when you was here,
Everybody was under you
Trying get that work
And yo' legend lives on
I got you face on my shirt
I smoke purp and sip on that Remy
Sheddin' mo' tears, big cousin'
Just thinking of yo' memory
I know you in that thug mansion with the ninja 'Pac
We gonna make it big,
I know you proud,
And I'm getting this paper
I told you befo'
I'm gon' twenty-fours on the scraper
Too bad you wasn't here to see me make it
It's so sad
That them ninjas stripped yo' life naked
I love you, cousin
God rest yo' soul
2006 forever
RIP Nate 1987-2006

-Boodah

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear about your lost. However, we know that the last thing your cousin would like to happen would be for you to follow in his footsteps. Learn from your cousin's mistakes and by doing so, show him that he is not forgotten but rather appreciated for taking the hard road for both of y'all. Best of luck with your songs and getting your life on track!

People Will Always Find A Way

I don't think it really matters if gun laws are changed, because people will always find a way to get 'em, if they really want to. Guns do assist people to kill, but it's ultimately the people. And if someone bad enough, they don't need a gun.

-Angeles

From The Beat: How do you explain, then, the lower death rates from guns in countries where it is difficult to get handguns? It's not a coincidence that in America, where guns are so easy to get, that over 30,000 people die every year from guns. That's the equivalent of about TEN, self inflicted, 9/11s... every year.

Don't Know How To Fight

Guns, well, I think that people that use guns don't know how to fight. Well, some people carry guns for their safety, from the people that are really trying to pull you down. Well, it might sound stupid but that's what I think. I heard this from a movie but it sounds good. When you shoot someone, you're just not hurting the person you shoot, but you also hurting their friends and family. Not physically but mentally. And if you fight, you live to fight another day. I put some on my part.

-Thinking

From The Beat: We like what you shared and appreciate the fact that you added some of your own thoughts! You're totally right about what you shared because a lot of people are impacted by the actions of one. Thinking about you and your situation, are others hurting because you are where you are? Do you think that others are being affected emotionally by what you've done? Even though it may not have involved guns. Can you do something about this, or more importantly, are you willing? This fight may be worth more than you think and we believe it's one you will win. Good luck!

Gun

What's up Beat? It's the Doc back with everybody from my unit. Well, today we're talking about guns and how we affiliate with them. The first time I held a gun was when I was nine. It was twenty-two pump action rifle with a small scope. It wasn't a big game rifle. Just big for birds and squirrels. But anyways, I've also shot .38 specials and shotguns. They were pretty fun to shoot but ever since then I haven't held one.

But there was this one time when someone put a gun under my chin and told me to give him my money. I said, "no" and he supposedly got bolder. Put in his magazine with hollow tips. I know because he showed me before he put it in his gun trying to scare me. Even though I was spooked I didn't give up. Just looked him in his eyes and stared.

I happened to be at a party with a bunch of other people too. So I wasn't trying to get embarrassed if I got jacked. (You know?) But anyways, hella people were scared too but I stepped up and told him to shoot. He didn't, he just stepped down and walked away. I was relieved when he left because someone told me that the gun didn't work! But, oh well.

Guns are tools. If you abuse that tool bad things happen. Or in some cases, you might survive. Kill a deer and you live. "Tools of life are a privilege, not a necessity."

-The Doc

From The Beat: If no one had guns, would you feel you needed one to be safe? That story about standing up to the fellow with the gun is scary. You must have been pretty sure he was bluffing. That was a huge risk you took. We're glad it turned out OK.

What's Upper Beat! Thoughts On Guns

How's everybody doing? Me cool, just thinking about this week's topic, Guns. This session, we were asked how many of us could get guns and how easy could we get them, and I see almost everybody raise their hands. I look around and see the people raising their hands and I think to myself, all these fakes trying to sound hard, while selling wolf tickets saying they got guns. I can't help myself from laughing. Because I know damn well that 95% of these cats are wolfing it hard.

In my hood, if we got a gun, we don't tell nobody we got one. We keep one on the low low. Only reason to have one is 'cause we in the game and we ain't trying to be taken out of it. It ain't easy to get a gun and a gun ain't for show. It's made for protection so nobody gets you for what you work so hard for.

I was a young teen when I got shot. I wasn't trippin' off of anybody, just minding my own business, but I got caught slippin'. But I'm still here. It's a battlefield. Ain't never where people just trying to earn their stars and stripes. This ain't a game, this is life. Got to watch your back, can't get caught slippin'. Keep it real, tell no lies.

With that I'm out, with much love and respect to everyone who knows me. That one and only.

-Jeremy

From The Beat: You may be right by saying that a lot of people are wolfing. Do you think that a lot of people wolf even harder since they have access to a gun? Meaning, that the gun they may have has them think they're harder than they really are, say without a gun? You're right when you say that life's not a game, so why do we allow ourselves to be in a position to possibly lose our life? Wouldn't it be safer and maybe even smarter, to do something else that will get us the money we need to survive? Can you keep it real when answering these questions?

Also Serve As Protection

Guns are violent to have , but also serve as protection for some people. But guns aren't violent, it's violent people with guns who kill. To me, owning a gun is stupid. Use your fists, not a gun.

-G

From The Beat: You're absolutely right about it's the people and not the guns who kill people. What do you think can be done to keep guns out of the hands of people who will use them in the wrong way? It looks and sounds like a very complicated problem. What do you think? They say there's a solution to every problem. Do you think there's one for guns? If so, what is it? If not, why do you think that's the case?

The Path To Respect

You wouldn't think non-committed crimes leave you in places so cold.

I thought when I stole money in life, I'd make it, but now it's just old.

I got in this intro to hell my third time for something I didn't even do. And now I know the bad things I've done, I'm dealing with now. It ain't at all coo'.

I used to say, I believe Karma without any interest or understanding. But, now, I feel it all around me, making myself to the point I'm demanding.

But really, what I'm trying to say is that if you're to where you're straight up greedy. You best understand and know for the rest of your life, you most likely ain't gone be succeeding.

So, keep your head up and fallow that path you were told too many years ago.

And if you don't do what you want, I guarantee you're gonna get caught later on by 5.0.

-Dust

From The Beat: Good point! What inspired you to write this? Was it after realizing all the wrong things you've done in your past? Are you also going to fallow the right path people will try to guide you to? So, tell us what are your plans after getting out of here? What will be the change you'll make to prevent you from returning to this place?

Where I'm From

Well, I come from a small town called Salinas. I grew up there since I was about twelve.

I think California has a lot of violence because it's so easy to get guns. Even young kids could get their hands on guns.

I think if they would make a law about people carrying guns, or even buying them, that would change it just a little bit. But it would help us, because in Salinas, a lot of people have died because of gunshots. And it's terrible for being in such small town. I know people that have died because of that. Even my uncle died of a gunshot in L.A. And I can't wait to grow up and see my kids with guns, because it's so easy to get them in the streets, or from my family members.

-Jorge

From The Beat: Why would you want to see your kids with guns? Especially knowing how they can hurt and/or kill people. Do you want to see that deadly and meaningless cycle of violence continue? Imagine how you felt when you heard about your uncle, how would you feel if the same tragic event struck one of your kids? We hope to have misread what you've shared, because it really doesn't make sense. As does a lot of the tragedies involving guns!

Grieving

Today the topic is grieve. I don't like when I feel bad on the inside. I am here and I wish I was on the out with my family and some of my homies kicking it, posting in the park, looking at the sky and just kicking. But I am here, all sad missing my loved ones.

I think my mom is also grieving because she cries when she visits me. It makes me feel bad that I am here and not with her, and I could be home with her spending time.

-Indio

From The Beat: Why do you want to be out if all you want is to kick it with your friends again? For what? To get locked up again? Of course your mother has and is still suffering for your mistakes. If we were you, we would do our best to stop her from shedding tears. Before it's too late, you should give her all she deserves.

Hand Canons

Where I'm from, we call guns hand canons, yaddamean. Some of the guys from my hood own them, but they don't go looking for trouble. They have them for protection. You know sometimes, other hoods and gangs might try and catch you slipppin, and end your life a little early. So they stay concealed, strapped and never leave the house without.

The hand canons are kind of like a guardian angel or something that keeps one safe. And also make one feel like they are ready for anything that can possibly happen.

I used to carry guns, but I'm cool, I'd rather chunk 'em and leave it at that.

I'm up outta here. So I'll hit you in a min. Gone. Keep it solid.

-Lil' Thizz

From The Beat: What made you change from carrying a gun to just chunking them and leaving it at that? Do you think what a person does, or how they do it says whether that person needs to carry a gun or not? If so, what needs to change so that person so they won't have to carry a gun? You're lucky to have left guns alone, because the consequences to owning and/or using one are very strict nowadays.

A Little Bit Historical

My spit is lyrical, hysterical,
A little bit historical
It's like an emporium within your mind
I'm flowin' this spit like Busta Rhymes,
I'm trying to make skrilla all the time,
Like an airplane it seems like I'm flyin,
But guess what, I ain't tryin
I'm on the grind,
And all these fools run and hide,
As the bullets fly by from my Tech 9's
All these beezies look hella fine
But most of them are just a waste of time,
All they want is my money, not my mind
But I ain't really trippin' all of them are mine
Like Muhammad Ali, my words sting like a bee
Shakes the earth like it's fallin
I sip nothing but Hennessey
And smoke nothing but the most purple of trees
And I also buy Christmas trees on a Halloween
And pumpkin on Christmas Eve.

-Deciple

From The Beat: What do you think makes your rap historical? Your rap is cool, but honestly, it sounds like a lot of the rap that's out right now. That wouldn't necessarily place you in the historical category. What may be place you there is speaking on what others may not be speaking on? Uniqueness is hard to find, but we think you can get there through practice. Do you think you can expand how you flow? Versatility is a good thing, wouldn't you say?

Violence

What I think about teaching peace through violence is that it's pretty stupid, because how can you teach peace by hitting someone? If you're showing violence when you're supposedly "correcting them."

Well I don't think it's worse because I got more violence when my dad hit me when I was about six years old. I thought it was all right to hit someone to correct them. Well look at me now where I'm at because of violence!

-Jose

From The Beat: We all have learned from experience and you've realized something really important which is that violence doesn't teach peace. Will this help you make better choices when dealing with conflicts or even raising your own children someday? There are many ways to deal with problems other than practicing actions that can bring more negative actions. Take this experience and let it teach you a good lesson. How are you going to handle things after getting out?

Not Easy To Come By

Today's topic is guns. This is one topic I can really relate to. Well I know most people have been saying that it's easy to get guns, but really, it's not. People who do get guns too, I bet more than half of them never shot anybody. Guns are not easy to come by and the ones that most people receive in the streets are stolen. I also don't think people get more violent by having a gun. The person is usually a violent person with, or without a gun.

Me personally, I carried a gun for protection, because you never know when somebody will run up on you. Either to rob you, or take your life away. Me being a gang member, I never was willing to take that chance.

-Frankie

From The Beat: The guns may not be easy to come by, but the consequences and time from having are very easy to come by. It sounds like how you choose to live your life, dictates the need to carry a gun. In the long run, do you think that this may catch up with you and hurt you? If so, is it then smart to continue doing so? If not, can you share why you feel this way?

The Only Way Out Is In

Let me first off say, man, this ain't a dream,
this society today.
RIP them fallen soldiers.
Ninjas try to do right, but my angels left, so I'm wrong. I'm in a youngsta body, but my mindset grown.
Get your mind back on God.
I thought you was gone when that fool slapped me.
Since I never had a daddy, it's like I'm alone.
Spitting heat in hell, this ain't mainstream.
Can't you tell, man?
I'm for real and it's bad right now,
so I don't smile,
at the moment, I ain't happy.
Ninjas tried to clap me, yet I breath.
Can you feel me in yo' chest?
My soul goes with The Beat.
I miss my fam'.
I'm trying to find these clues,
God told me the only way out is through Him.

-Smash

From The Beat: What a tough piece. What did God tell you? Although you encourage others to focus on religion in your piece, do you think the God you believe in is pleased with how you are living your own life? You sound confused; you can't have the best of both worlds. However, in the end, we know you'll make the right choice.

One Day

I was in another party and some foo's came through talking shhh to my sister and to me, so I grabbed a rock and through it at the front window. The window cracked and they left later.

That night I went to the store with my step-brothers and two Chevy's bust through bumping music. I looked at them and they looked at me. When I came out of the store the Chevy's were parked in front. When they seen us walking out, they step on the gas, we all ran and I looked back and seen the two drivers with a gun on their left hand hanging out the window.

I told them to get down because they were going to step in front of me, so the only thing I seen was a van parked and I jumped under it. I seen the cars pass through and next thing and heard it was five to seven shots. I went to the house and my two step brother were all right.

-S

From The Beat: Oh, wow, that was very close! It seems that the game you are playing is getting very close to game over. If you had gotten hurt, you would be regretting it right now. If we were you, we would do our best in staying away from places and people who can hurt us and take the most important thing we all have, our lives. Don't let another near fatal tragedy have to happen to you in order to make a change. Change now!

All About Me! Pray For Me!

Hey Beat? I'm not really into any of the topics, so I'm going to write about what's going to happen with me.

Well I came here March 12th and I turned myself in that day. The reason I did that was because I am pregnant and shhh was just getting harder and harder.

My mom and I were going through a lot. I wanted to do it for my unborn child, my mom, and my man. I've been here for over two months and I been through a lot, but my days are getting better and better.

I got accepted into transitional housing. All I am waiting for is my PO 'cause it's thirty-three hundred a month and my mom can't pay that. I'm praying that they can find a program that can help me. I really need to get out of here and take care of my baby and just live a life that's healthy for me.

Man Beat, I know you might not be able to help me, but can you do me a favor and pray for me. I know if you guys can help me find a funding program, you would, but I know that can't happen. Please just pray for me. I got court again soon,, so I'm praying and hoping just like everyone else.

Well Beat thank you for your time and I will holla at you later. And to all who is doing time, keep your head up and remember that God has better days for everyone no matter what you did to get up in here or where you are. Just pray and He'll understand.

Well, see ya!

-S

From The Beat: Thanks for all the trust you got in us. We'll pray for you. We hope you get accepted to this program and we hope it teaches/helps you to become a better person, a mother and a responsible young lady. Don't lose your faith. Like you've said, "God has better day for everyone no matter what." The stronger your faith towards God is, the greater chances you have to be heard from Him. Things will be all right! Trust us!

Grieve

Yeah, I've had someone talking to me about a loss in my family. I had family counseling for a cool minute, about a year.

What happened was my cousin had some funk with some heads and he had family problems of his own.

What I mean is that his mom kicked him out. So he was staying in his car. He was just posted in his car and out the cuts some peeps came out and shot him twice in the chest and once in the head.

When he passed away, yeah, I can say there was grieve and a lot of it. After that, there was a lot of hate 'cause them simps got outta jail after a couple of years.

So yeah grief has been in my life, but that's pretty much it.

-Yh

From The Beat: Sorry for your loss. Remember that revenge always brings nothing else but more revenge, more problems, more death and more grieve. So, if you are thinking on revenge, you know pretty much what would come out of it. It's very sad to hear how people are loosing their lives so young over gangs, drugs and hate. And we are very sorry for that! Can you take this experience to learn something from what happened?

I Feel

I feel like talking about some good, I don't feel like talking about what keeps me going up in this b-s.

Today I called my mom who I haven't talked to in two weeks. She told me she misses me and loves me. She three-wayed my man and it was the best feeling I've had. It felt good to listen to his voice say "I love you baby."

Listening to the people I care about telling me that they love me and miss me, makes me want to stay with them forever and never come back to this b-s.

I just hope I can change my life and be there for my family, so they can be there for me. I think I should call home more because it always makes me happy to talk to the ones I love.

-Velvet

From The Beat: You have people who love you and want the best for you. What's the problem? What's holding you back from being with them? They're waiting for your return, how long are going to make them wait? If you really care for them, show them what you are capable of doing to always see them happy.

Them Thumpers (Guns)

What it do, man? Yeah, the topic I'm gonna speak on is them thump things (guns). Well, you know raised in East Palo Alto, them thangs (guns) ain't unusual. Damn near everybody and their momma got a thang.

Well, when I was younger, I also knew I would have a thing. It was just a matter of time, but I never thought a ninja would be locked up for somebody else using it: A .211.

Man, it's kinda messed up how I gotta take a strike for this, but what can I say livin' da life I lived? Supposedly it's bound for a ninja to do time or get murked (killed), but yeah, see, I'm getting my head on straight. Me and my dudes 'bout to do this rap, ya' underdig? Hopefully this helps me get my stuff straight. Well, I'm 'bout to get gone like Sean-T. Pray for us that we make it through this life we livin'!!

-Boodah

From The Beat: How do you feel about all these guns in your neighborhood (and in the world)? Did someone ever tell you that having a "thing" was a bad thing? We wish you nothing but the best of luck and hope that this lesson you just learned doesn't cost you in the end.

The Time Is Now

What up, Beat?

Well, as I said a while back in one of The Beats, my lady was pregnant and due soon. Well, yes, she has had my little boy and I could have never, ever been any happier! They complete my life and I can't wait to be with them, but you know a baby comes with a lot of responsibility, but hey; every man needs to face reality and takes responsibility for his actions one day, and mine is now.

Well, just wanted to say what up to all. Much love and make sure to be taking care of them responsibilities.

-Boy

From The Beat: Let us at The Beat wish you the first congratulations on becoming a father! You're right; being a father is a huge responsibility and one that you need to ask yourself: Are you truly ready to handle? Don't just talk about it; be about it!

It Possible To Teach Peace With Violence

You can't teach peach with violence, because peace is the opposite of violence. You can not teach someone not to be violent by hitting them, because all you are doing is being violent.

I remember when I was 7 years old and I got into a fight at school and my mom was real mad at me. So she took me to the house, and she said "you need to stop getting in trouble, and fights at school." And then she slapped me in the face. That was the first and the last time she ever hit me.

v-M

From The Beat: You're right! Violence brings nothing else but more violence, revenge and destruction, and we can only hope when one reads and sees violence that they can and will push the peace effort on their community. Did you tell your mother how you felt about getting hit? What can she do to help you stay out of trouble and from coming back into this place?

The First Time I Got Shot At

The first time I got shot at was when I was seven years old.

Some rivals was looking for my dad. The rivals went right by my pad like five times. The first time, the rivals was going slow and bumping some music. I look out my window. I thought the rival was my dad's friends.

Then they did the same thing two more times. So I told my sister someone's going around the pad. The third time, there was two cars driving through. My sister looked out and she told me to go to my room. I said ok. While I was going to my room, I turned around and went outside.

When I went outside, the cars was coming slow. I went to the front then they shot because my dad came out looking for me. I was scared. I was crying because my dad got shot in the back. Well that's all for today Beat.

-Uso

From The Beat: We're sorry for your dad! What happened to him? Did he make it? We hope you learn how dangerous it is to mess with gangs and guns or should we say straight hate. Stay away from the negative. All they do is to hurt people! Step up and make your family proud! Do something big with your life, try school!

Bad Guns

I think getting guns is way too easy, because all you have to be is eighteen (to legally buy a gun). Also most of the people who have guns use them for bad reasons, like killing and injuring people and making people grieve.

Guns make a lot of people lose all their loved ones. Well, that's all I have to say Beat.

You can't teach peace through violence because then every time you use violence, you might get a violent reaction. Then you would use violence and it would keep on going until somebody gets really injured or killed.

-Chopsticks

From The Beat: That's right! It's feels good to have another person in out team who is against guns and violence. Guns are very dangerous and, like you've said, it has killed and injured many people. Have you advised anyone who had a gun to get rid of it? Stay away from them!

Do A Little This, Do A Little That

I've faced the wind
I've felt the rain
Sailed through storms
Gone through hurricanes
Life is rough
Living is tough
Gots to go through struggle
To get what you want
To get what you need
To stay on yo' feet
But some people go too far
On how they gettin' they money
Sellin' they body
Sellin' them drugs
Stealin' them cars
Sellin' them guns
Do a little this
Do a little that
Smiles and frowns
Ups and downs
What comes around
Goes around
What goes up
Must come down
What happened before
Will happen again
Only God can tell
When our lives gon' end
Wars may come
Wars may go
But my uso soldiers
Stay eternal

-Tiny Samoa

From The Beat: You say that some people go a little far, but who is to judge what "a little far" means? If you steal from someone, is that going too far? If you attack an "enemy" are you going too far? Is it "too far" when you're doing drugs? Have you ever gone "too far"? What was that situation about?

You can't teach peace through violence because then every time you use violence, you might get a violent reaction. Then you would use violence and it would keep on going until somebody gets really injured or kille

Speaking From Experience

No, I don't think it's possible to teach peace through violence, because throughout my childhood, I've seen my dad hit me and beat my older brother.

When my parents got divorced, me and brothers and sisters grew up. My brother was known for fighting at school. As he got older, he got locked up, for fighting, for a year in county. Once he got out he lightened up, but I was getting into fights at school too.

He would hit me for doing it and the first time I got locked up was for fighting and now it's continuing so now you can't teach peace through violence.

-Yh

From The Beat: Well, we think it is time you do the same thing your brother did- lighten up! You don't have to repeat the same story over again. If your brother is telling you not to do this or that is because he knows what would happen to you. Remember he has already experienced what you're going through. We are sure he doesn't want you to live what he lived in there.

The Big Chase

This one time I was chased by the police, it all started while I was in the turning lane going to my potna's house to drop him off.

We was in a stolen car that I had got that morning. We was chillin' waitin' for the light to turn green. I looked over and seen these two white ninjas in the car next to me. They was lookin' right at me…

I just kept it cool lit up a Newport on they ass and told my ninjas to be cool 'cause I thought them boys was next to us.

When I look over again I saw that they had ear pieces, badges and vests. They tried to look away hella quick, but I was already knowing.

The light turned green so I bent that corner. I looked in the rear view, they was right behind me, so I get ready to take them on one. I was about to hit another corner when they put the lights on and tried to blurp me.

I then hopped on the way-way went to Hayward, hit a couple corners, got back on the way way to Oakland, there was like six or seven cars behind me.

I went on one in East Oakland lost 'em a couple times then I tried to come back out on the' ass and lost 'em for good in San Leandro.

That was the best high speed I been in, that shhh was hella fun 'cause we went on one and got away. Let them cops know I had bars for they stupid ass.

-Ray-Ray, Alameda

From The Beat: What a car chase! Very fortunate, we suppose, that you got away and no one was hurt. What were you thinking while you were driving? Did you think you would get caught? And if you did? Well Ray Ray, for the last several months we have seen so much potential in you. We see this leader as a writer if you chose to, but obviously writing is not that big of a deal for you, we wish it was, 'cause you have mad skills and besides that, your honesty is so important, but teaching your peers and the many Beat readers around the country obviously isn't that important. Try it one time! Tell us about you and your upbringing! Paint a picture for us all!

In This World

In this world it's so hard to live in because you have to live by rules. If you don't live by the rules, you might get killed. In this world you have killers, nice people and mean people.

In this world you have Juvenile Halls and prisons. I have so much to say about this world, I can't even say all of them – but I can say that this life I live is messed up. Because I have did wrong, and I'm only 16 going on 17. I will be 17 on May tenth, and I go to court that day, so that means I will be in this place they call home on my birthday.

In this world you have drunk people, you have crackheads.

You have so many different people in this world and this world is so small . That's all I have to say about that one. Gone.

-Alex

From The Beat: In this world you have poets. In this world you have darkness. In this world you have sunsets over mountain ranges and polar ice caps. In this whales whose heads are twice the size of the room you sleep in. In this world you have death sentences. In this world you have Indian monks who feed the poor and take vows of silence. In this world you have books that were written three thousand years ago by people that speak truths we still feel so many centuries later. In this world you have the sons of slaves and the sons of their masters working together to record music that makes people dance across the world. In this world we have miracles – lights in the darkness that we wait for and live for, lights that keep us going. You have it in you to become one of those lights. Don't stop saying what you have to say, "about this world."

Life Like Nascar

Ever since I came up in here my mind has been clear.
When I lay on my bed, I hear voices in my ear
I know it's kind of weird, but I show no fear
The voices I hear, say I will be helped
My life is like a nascar, without a seatbelt.

-J-Money

From The Beat: Check it out, J-Money – you started off this particular workshop saying you weren't "feelin' it," you had "nothing to say to day" and then you whipped this little gem off in five minutes at the end of workshop, just because we scribbled down two lines you'd written. Even at just five percent of full potential, you still produce great writing. Can't wait to see what you'll do next time, when you give it that full one hundred again! (Oh, and P.S. Fasten your seat belt, as they say, it's the law!)

Deep Tears Poem

I'm watchin' movies and it reminds me of you
Find myself crying for you, but that's because you're my boo
Tears streaming down my face 'cause it reminds me of you
I never felt this way, what do I do?

Is it because you're having my son?
If I wanted, I could run
I miss you every day, all day long.
You and my heart – and this my Deep Tears Poem

Can't think without you in my arms
I find myself stressin' but I can't reform?
I need you to hold my hands, so I don't have to drop these tears
Heart crying from all these love fears

-Lil' Papa

From The Beat: Another lovely poem – from a person who isn't afraid to let his heart beat on paper.

Regret

I regret running from camp because now I can't see my lady or my family. They said that they're letting me go home when I turn eighteen. I've been in and out of the hall since I was fifteen. Now that I am seventeen years old, I got to think about my actions now because I am not trying to hit Santa Rita. I regret running from camp.

-Young Mess

From The Beat: It's ok to have regrets, -we all do. It's part of being human. You are thinking about your future a lot right now, which is appropriate since you will turn eighteen soon. You have experienced the pain and isolation of being locked up in the hall, and you have the wisdom to want to avoid going to Santa Rita. All of this maturity comes through in your piece. We will be hoping for the best for you, for your court date and for your future. You deserve happiness, peace, and the love of your family in your life. Best of luck.

Going Dumb For So Many Reasons

Going dumb is what everybody do out on the outs and in here too. People go dumb for so many reasons, I can't even tell you all of them. Goin' dumb is something you have to feel, 'cause if you go dumb without feeling it, you look hella stupid or you might get hurt for real.

Like one night, me and my ninjas was at a party and some dude was goin' dumb and he bumped into somebody – and the next thing I knew somebody got shot like three times. So all I'm sayin' is watch where you go dumb and who you go dumb on, 'cause you don't know what they do or how they gon' react. They just might do something to you that might make you feel stupid. And watch where you be at too, 'cause if you is in a place that you don't know you just might get killed for real though.

-Lil' Alex

From The Beat: The thing that makes your advice so powerful is that you've been there, you've seen it, and you've been on both sides: you've been the person that gets hurt and the person that does the hurting. Now you're a wiser person, for everything you've seen. It's easy to see why a person would want to just go crazy and let loose all the feelings of stress and not have to think about it, but then on the other hand, like you say, the consequences of it are nothing but nightmares. But if what you want is just to dance and have a good time, without the violence – there are all ages dance clubs, slam competitions, chaperoned parties, sporting events, etc… If you were out, would you want to go to those, or do you think you'd be tempted back into the dangerous scenes you've been in the past.

Dear Judge

My name is Alex. I know I have been doing wrong since I have been in your court, but judge just forgive me for what I just did, I didn't know what I was doing, I was high on pills like 2 or 3 of them. I should not have ran from camp, but my mom has heart problems and at that time my brother was in jail, but I'm just asking you not to send me to the big house: Please don't. My mom need me, and I have a baby on the way. It is due in September and I just want to be there for him.

I know I ran from every place that you sent me to, but if you give me one last chance out, you will be happy. I know I have been here too many times, but I will make this my last time here. Just give me one last chance with my mom, please. Please don't sent me to CYA for a long time.

-Lil' Alex

From The Beat: We don't know if you meant this as an example, or if this is a letter you really sent to the judge. There's two things we'd add to this... one is something that we know, which is that ever since you've been locked up, you've made a really admirable effort to grow, to understand who you are – remember how when you first came to The Beat you could barely read? Now you write five or six pieces a week, and they almost never have hate in them. Usually they are about your thoughts, your hopes, and your honest view of the world you live in. That shows the kind of maturity that could translate into positivity on the outs too, especially if you have support. So the next thing you might want to tell the judge is who you will turn to on the outs. Do you have a mentoring program, a mentor, a family member, a plan to join a support group to quit drugs? These are the kinds of things a judge will want to know: He doesn't just want to know you 'promise' to change, he wants to know that you've taken steps to make that change happen. It might be time for a Dear Judge Part 2.

Running For Freedom

It's been so many chases in my life as far as running, like one time I was trying to break into a house when I was a young teen, me and my two friends we tried to get in through the back door and then someone opened it, so then we got scared and ran. We jumped the first fence we seen and then I got my hand got caught on a fence, and then it got sliced on the fence, and then three years later I did the same thing but this time I was in the house and I jump out the window and hit a fence with bars and the bar went in my leg which I got stitches inside and out. I always chase girls and they know who they is because they run every time from the kid.

-Sunny D

From The Beat: Whoa, that must have hurt! We are glad that you got out of those situations in one piece. Hopefully, you won't be breaking into any more houses any time soon. And as far as girl-chasing goes, you might get your heart broken once in awhile, but at least you probably won't need stitches.

Out The Hood And Up To Good

My older brother made it out the hood now he up to good. Ever since he came out he got a job and he bought a car. Sometimes I would want him to still be in the hood but sometimes I think is coo' that he changed his life around 'cause it is less problems for my mom as well for him. And now he got a baby on the way. I don't think he's ready for it but if he think he is that's on him. I'm not disappointed in him. Well, sometimes, but what ever he did, it was better for him as well as for my family. I wouldn't want my little brothers to be in here neither.

-O

From The Beat: It sounds like your older brother has a lot of responsibility (job, car, baby on the way) but that his relationship with your mom and with you is better than ever. Getting back to you, hopefully you can keep talking to brother and learning more about how he made some changes in his life. You can tell him that you miss seeing him around the hood, but that you respect his decision and want him to keep on giving you brotherly advice. Like you wrote at the end of your piece, he has protective feelings about you. He doesn't want to see you incarcerated. He wants to see you healthy and safe, no matter where you live.

The Last Time

The last time I was wit my ninja Meech was in 2005 at the scream tour we was getting on hella pearl and then we went to some girls house did our thang and that was it then the next month he got shot and died, that was my last time wit' my ninja Meech.

The last time I seen my ninja Meezy was when my ninja Scooby was dancin' at Laney College and Mezzy was there then he bounced then later on that night he got shot and died, that was my last time wit my ninja Meezy.

-Lil' Guise

From The Beat: We are so sorry to hear of the tragic loss of your friends. You must miss them very much. When you think about their deaths, do you think there were decisions they made that put them into a dangerous situation? Or were they just in the wrong place at the wrong time? If they had made different choices, could they be alive today? We hope that you will honor your friends' memory by walking a path of peace in your life.

Learning The Hard Way

I regret hanging and around bad people, and don't never take advices from my older cousins when they was telling me to stop doing the things I'm doing, but I always learn from the hard way.

Then after I've been to the Hall I always tell myself I'm not gonna do nothin' to get me back in but after a while I think I'm good and say forget it. I'm about to go do some more licks. That's why I always get locked up. Well I'm running out of time, got to go now. Holla!

-Drew

From The Beat: They say the first thing you have to do to fix a problem is to face it, which you just did, in this piece. Something happens inside you between the moment when you're sure you want to do right and when you get a bad case of wanting to throw it all away for the quick fix. If you can figure out what it is that happens, then you can beat it back next time. So what is it? Is it those friends, is it when stress hits you? Is it because you start to forget how bad it felt last time you got caught? Think hard on this, and you might just be able to come up with a solution so you never lose your freedom again.

I'm Not Mad At You

The PO and Judge is playing with my emotion. First they told me that I'm going to CYA for seven years then they said I can go to Camp Sweeney then they said I can't.

I don't know they always got me stressing in here. Now I'm going to court on April fifth, and I hope they just sentence my time so I can do my time and get out.

I'm going to the new juvenile hall also.

I should've never went with my potnas hittin' them houses. I should've stayed with the females. I should've drove but I can't change the past.

But for now I just wish I know where I'm going to go so I won't be stressing.

-Lil' "L"

From The Beat: One of the hardest things about being stuck in a position like yours must be the lack of control over your own life that you describe here. The nature of imprisonment is inherently disempowering, and when you're young and don't have the resources needed in order to afford representatives who might be able to give you some sort of legal support, well that's even worse. We understand what you're feeling and can only tell you to stay strong—eventually a decision will be made and you'll at least know what to prepare yourself for.

The Love That Never Dies . . .

... is your own family's love. No matter what bad things or stupid things that I do, they will love me.

-Ryan

From The Beat: This is short but so so true. Was this something you always knew, or did it take coming into the Hall to teach it to you? Was it something a family member said to you, or was it just seeing their faces on visiting day?

My Story, My Advice

One thing I regret not doing would be talking to the 2-11 police in Downtown Oakland, because they set me up. The 2-11 police are set-up artists, they will try to brainwash you, they put me in a room at "nine o'clock" at night and came and talk to me while I was half-way asleep. Some advice I can give to people would be don't talk to no one unless your attorney is present.

-David

From The Beat: You do have a right to an attorney when you talk to the police, that is true. We are sorry to hear about your experience. As unpleasant as it was, hopefully it will keep you out of trouble in the future so that you don't have to get arrested or do time again. The best way to avoid getting set up is to stay out of trouble, plain and simple.

No Regrets

I don't regret anything because I like my life the way it is.
We all go through dirt to get where we at.
And I'm going through my dirt right now,
but I got people helping me with my future
when I get out so I got something very good out of this time.
So I don't regret anything
it just hurts me to see my mom in this place,
but I know she cares for me.
She always visits me when she can
she does everything she can for me while I'm in here.

-Juan

From The Beat: You are very fortunate to have a release plan and a supportive family so you never see this place again. Shoe your mom how much she truly means to you, by taking good care of yourself. Stay in touch!

I Regret Drinking and Driving

It was a Friday morning when I told my friend to let me borrow his car. I took it to school and picked up some friends we went to Safeway and racked a couple of bottles.

We started drinking. I took a fifth of Bacardi. Thirty minutes later I was messed up and we was driving around.

It was raining, I was doing donuts, and the police saw me so I took them on one for about 10 minutes. I was going at about 110 miles and I tried to turn and I hit a rail and the car spun and all the tires popped and it flipped three times. The car ended up looking like a ball. My friend was throwing up blood and he told me to run with him but I didn't want to so I got arrested.

-Martin

From The Beat: What a frightening experience this must have been for you and your friend. Was anybody seriously hurt or killed? Where did your friend go? Did the police catch him? We are glad that you survived to tell your tale and learn from it. Thousands of people are killed in drunk driving accidents every year. You know that you narrowly escaped death in this crash. Hopefully you will use your second chance at life to make good choices.

Regrets

What I regret doing is dropping out of school, and hurting my mom. getting her feelings hurt, doing a lot of stupid stuff in life. Doing illegal shhh.

-Pedro

From The Beat: It takes guts to own up to some things we may have done in the past that we regret now. We admire your honesty. You're going to get the chance to make some changes here in a few months. Do you plan to get back into school? Make some changes in your relationship with your mom? There are people who can help you with these things if you need help. The best way to get rid of those regrets is to start living life in a way that makes you feel good and feel proud. What do you think is the first step towards that?

What I Regret Doing In Life

What I regret is at a young age getting into trouble put stress on my mom and coming to the hall.

From the age of eleven, I started smoking and drinking getting suspended from school.

At the age of twelve, stealing cars, I end up coming to jail.

I regret doing them things because if I would never did them things I could've graduated from high school, now I don't know if I got to get a GED or if I still am able to get my high school diploma.

-Daniel

From The Beat: If you really want your high school diploma, we encourage you to go for it. We also hope this wake up call is enough to get you back on track!

Regret Real Bad

Well, Beat Within I do regret something real bad man: This is how it started. When I got out the Hall, I was doin' cool, but some PO's came to my house and said I'm on house arrest, so I was hella mad.

I only did it for a week, then became on the run. I was at my homies House just chillin'. I was on the run for about a month. Then I got caught so I went back to the halls for a month, then they put me in a group home for 6 to 8 man. When I first got there I was doin' cool, but after a lil' bit I started messin' up.

The group home was hella cool, you feel me good food, we get to be out doors. we don't get trouble easy it was cool and I was getting home passes.

But on one home pass I got drunk and didn't come back in there for four moths and I only had 2 more to go but I couldn't make now I'm up in Camp Sweeney, 6 to 9 months and this Camp Sweeney ain't as cool as the group home, so Beat Within, that's what I regret, but I'm goin' to do my time.

But Beat Within, let me tell you how my group home was. Man, it was pretty cool, you feel me. We had better food, way more seconds, we could watch TV whenever we wanted to and played games too, I mean better games on PS2 and stuff, we got to go out on the weekend, and watch movies – even R rated if we wanted to. We'd go out to parks and play basket ball and stuff on the weekend we stay up until 12 p.m. and if you on a high status you get to go to regular school and on your home pass. You ain't got to worry about the staff callin' you 'cause you call them so you could be out later at night instead of comin' in early for your staff to call you but that's pretty much it Beat Within, I'm out.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: We're sorry to see you back but glad, of course to be able to print your writing. Even telling this regretful story, you still know how to break down a situation with all your talent and smarts. We always want to publish you, and we keep looking forward to that day when we get a piece from you to print in the back, The Beat Without, telling us you've got your life straight on the outs, telling us good news about how you're living and what you're doing, and then teaching the new generation of Beat Within writers what you've learned about freedom. But that can't happen yet, so we have another question for you: Do you think any of this would have happened if you didn't drink? It sounds like the drinking is what tipped off the bad decision-making. What do you think?

The Love That Never Dies

The love that never dies
It stays on like a light
Where no one ever fights
It keeps me going
When I feel let down
I go to the love that never dies
She has the twinkle in her eyes
Her loves flows like water
The love that never dies.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem. We love the image of the "love that never dies, that stays on like a light". You capture the unending quality of true love, -it serves as a guide for us in our lives, and keeps us going. Thank you for this inspiring and hopeful poem. Keep writing!

You Are My World You Are My Love

What if we had never met?
What would I be doing?
What kind of life would I have?
I often think about these things
I always come to the same conclusion
without you I would be an extremely unhappy person.
Living an unhappy life
I know that we met for a reason
and that reason was that you and I were meant to be in love
with each other
you and I were meant to be a team
giving us strength to function
happily in the world
I am so thankful that things turned out the way they did
and we were brought together
you are my world, you are my love.

-Marcus

From The Beat: That's the million dollar question, what would any of us be doing if we all took another turn in life? Obviously your lady is special to you, so be thankful for what you got, but don't blow it the next go round. Follow your heart. Live your life free of drama.

Deep Inside My Heart

Deep inside my heart, I regret a lot of things. Everything I've done to hurt my family and myself, and everything I've done to hurt my family and myself, and everything and everyone else. My family was hurt the most because I'm here, and this wasn't the only cause I caught, so I caught them a lot of money lately. Also to all the hearts I broke out there, loving someone but not showing it. I've been kinda mean lately.

Other than that, I'm a very good person. I got good grades I had a job, I do lots of positive things on the outs .Anyways, I plan on visiting The Beat to get some help with criminal justice because I'm a take some classes on that when I get out at a community college or maybe even a junior college. I know I can't make it to a university from where I'm at now.

I want to get my diploma right now because I could get better chances at getting jobs. I don't want to get a GED. Cause in my eyes that's a Good. Enough. Diploma.

-Jr

From The Beat: It was great to read this, because too many times, kids lower their expectations when they get locked up. And no one should ever have to lower his horizons. Set your sights as high as you can – and yes, the trouble you've been in and the school setbacks might keep you out of a four year college or university for now, but a Junior college or community college can be that first step towards having the school, and the life, of your dreams. But you haven't told us what your dreams were. Has being on this side of the criminal justice made you decide you want to be lawyer? You'd be the kind of lawyer who understood what your clients were going through, that's for sure.

VT: He Should Have Shot Himself

What I feel about the massacre is that it was crazy and it's always a white guy shooting people at school because they got made fun of or something.

Maybe they should try to go to trauma class or something like that but what can you do, people are crazy these days and the way I feel about it is bad because innocent people died and got injured and went through a lot. Maybe he just should have shot himself, I mean if he felt so bad, about himself.

I would've just minded my own business, and went on with my life, cause wherever you go, you gonna be made fun of or talked about.

-Dolla

From The Beat: No one knows for sure what it was that drove Cho off the deep end. (By the way, heads up: He was Asian, not white) But it does seem like he was missing that thing you're talking about ... it's like he didn't know how to "go on with his life." You have a different kind of strength when you think about it, you've seen some terrible things in your life, and yet you make it through the day being positive. What is our secret? How do you do it?

Livin' Great

In five years I think I'll be livin' great. I say this because when I get out of Camp Sweeney I'm going to change my life.

When I get out I plan to go to school and get a job. Make my money... legally. Maybe get married with my baby girl Karla. Have a kid, make my own family, get my own house, my own car, know what I mean? Yeah, I'm goin' to change my life. I'm gonna try to stop posting on the block. I'm gonna try to stop living dangerous.

-Dirty

From The Beat: This piece starts out strong and confident but then shakes at the end, like in those last few sentences you lost a little bit of your faith in yourself. Because it's so hard to change, you need a more concrete idea in your mind than trying to stop posting on the block. One way to do it is to ask yourself what you like doing (that's legal) so much that you could do it INSTEAD of posting on the block: Sports, mixing tracks? Have you ever tried acting? Working on bikes? The people we know who got out of the game managed to do it because they found something else they cared about and liked doing, and they focused on that.

Virginia Tech: Outta Pocket

On my mind today is mainly about that massacre that happened yesterday at Virginia Tech. I'm sure most of you heard the story, and if not then you should find out, basically to me it was a big shock.

It was really below the belt, out of pocket type of stuff. I believe people like that should have gotten help a long time ago, when people thought he was crazy, anyways I don't think anything is wrong with having a gun, except for having a gun on campus. I feel really bad for all the people who really cared about then and now lost all them. They were all college students who had a great future.

I think if anyone has that feeling, they should commit suicide. People's lives in America are much better than lots of other lives across the world, so for all the people down and depressed, keep your head up 'cause you got to remember that there are people suffering every day.

-Jr

From The Beat: It says a lot about you that you devoted so much time to this question, when you have so much personal stress in your life. You still managed to take some time out to think about the troubles of other people. As for VT, the whole story was terrible, but what's crazy is that, like you said, there are people suffering every day, all over the world. Why do you think the media went all crazy about this story – when, say the deaths in Iraq and other places don't even always make the top headlines every day?

Program

What's crackin wit' it as for me not a whole lot of just maintainin'. What my topic is built on today is program.

It don't matter what type of program it is, I was always told to do my program. Not let it do me. See my time here in jail is made to be hard but I choose otherwise and I choose to make it layback and chilled back. And that's the way it should be.

You see for me privileges is what makes my time float like a cloud. For instance, being a unit worker takes my mind off what's been on my shoulder. A program is meant for you to do so when you go against the grain most likely it's not going to be good for you.

-June

From The Beat: You make a good point that time is a little bit easier to do when you "go with the program" and earn privileges and make an effort to get along with counselors and others in your unit. It's good that you have become a unit worker and we can say that we always enjoy seeing you and interacting with you at Beat workshops. However, just to challenge you a bit further, what has really been on your mind during your time in the unit? Are you eager to get back into your old life, or are you considering some deeper changes? Do you have regrets? Do you have fears? We hope that we will see you continue to dig deeper in your writing. Remember, the Beat is about you, not your program.

Are You Ready

Are you ready to go someplace
Above the clouds in the mist of the sky
Are you ready to go someplace
That can't be seen by the human eye
Are you ready to go someplace
Where the people don't lie or are you ready to go someplace
Where you burn for eternal life
Are you ready to go someplace
Where there are humans that spread their wings
Are you ready to go someplace
Where only evil kills your dreams
Are you ready to go someplace
Where people repeatedly dying
Are you ready to go someplace
Where's tears in joy crying or
Are you ready to go someplace body's souls and flesh fryin'
are you ready to go some place.

-Lil F

From The Beat: You paint some vivid pictures of the afterlife in your piece, which reads like a poem, or like a song. We like how it presents the different scenarios of heaven and hell, and asks the reader if they are ready for these realities. You present it as a choice. Our actions here on earth determine what will happen to us when we die. Many of the world's religions share this belief. If we do in fact have a choice, what do you think is important to do in your life to make sure that you end up in a place of peace and joy? Are there places or situations here on earth where evil can kill our dreams, and people are repeatedly dying? We look forward to hearing more from you about these spiritual themes.

I Regret Going To My Junior Prom

If I had a chance to change Friday the thirteith I wouldn't of went to my Junior Prom. It's because of my prom that I'm in here, and it's because of a girl I'm in here.

If I would of did what I did that night with the girl the next day I would have been out because I would have come home on Saturday if I didn't do that with the girl, but my time after the junior prom got me in trouble not the prom so I should of just took the ride home from her mom instead of her and her mom asking me to spend a night 'til her mom goes to work in the morning and gives me a ride.

-Akron

From The Beat: Regret is a funny thing, it seems to illuminate the past so clearly. Hopefully you can take the experience with you and make it work for your future.

Chased!!!!

I got chased by some drunk amigos and I almost murked somebody. I was thizzin' hella hard off a red scorpion triple stack. I was with my big cousin, and Bruheem G. I walked up on them, and start talking that shhh, like what. Then I kicked they car, and they hopped out that g-thang.

I could smell the beer on they breath. I start backing up 'cause this 'migo, like six foot four tall. He hella big then I take off on one and cut the hide. I see them chasin' my cousin and bra with a four feet pole. I run for they car but one of them come back and I cut.

We met up and go back to the apartments.

-Doogie

From The Beat: This is one of those classic near-misses: You were off pills, they were drunk, both sides weren't thinking straight, and fortunately it didn't get out of control. A lot of the murder cases that send kids up for life sentences start with incidents just like this, except that someone pulls out a gun. In this case, you got lucky. If there'd been a gun on hand, how do you think this story might have ended up?

The Love That Never Dies

The love for the hood is my one that will never die because it is the one that will never tell a lie cheat or do me wrong. It will not stab me in the back. It is the love that will. So that's my love that will never die.

-Skarface

From The Beat: It's true, love for where we come from is very strong and can last a lifetime. The sights, the sounds, the smells... Where do you look forward to visiting in your 'hood when you get out? Who are you going to go visit first? What is something that you can do to show love to your hood by making it a better or safer place to live?

My Love That Never Dies

My love that will never die is the love for my ex-lady and for my hood. The love for my lady will always be in my heart, no matter what, I can't get her out of my mind. Up in here, I think of her every day and every night and when I get out I'm gonna make things right between me and her.

The love for my hood is always wit me every day I stay reppin', but anyway I'm proud of where I'm from even though I'm black and Mexican I stay repping my city because that's how much I love it.

-Big John

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing these things that are on your mind with your fellow Beat readers! First of all, we are sorry to hear that you are missing your ex-lady. Only time can heal this kind of hurt, and it is a painful process to go through. It will get easier, we promise. We hope that things work out for the best for you, whether it means making up with her, creating a new kind of friendship with her, or eventually moving on and meeting a wonderful new lady. As for your hood, you definitely have a unique view on things because you are both Black and Mexican. Having two cultures is something to be proud of, even though it can be hard sometimes when people are ignorant or assume certain things about you based on your heritage. Was growing up bi-racial in your town difficult? What do you love about your town? What could make it better?

My Role Model

The big homie who made it out the hood. I know a big homie that caught a gun case and did one year in the Federal Pen. He out now and working a good job and taking care of his kids and he also my big cousin and role model. And he from my block. I look up to him because he always telling me to get off the block and go to school but I still do what I do.

-Juan

From The Beat: Your cousin sounds like a great guy! You are lucky to have this role model in your family. It sounds like he did some serious thinking while he was in the Pen and has changed his life in very meaningful and positive ways. If you have the opportunity, seek him out for advice and conversation. Ask him questions. Ask him about the Pen, and about his job. We are happy for you that you have someone in your life that can show you an alternative to a life spent in and out of jail.

My Regrets With My Boyfriend

I'm in a relationship with a boy that I've been in for 2 years now. Currently we have been having some real tough emotional problems, and it's mostly because we both have made many mistakes.

I regret lying to him in the beginning, because I think if I had been more honest at first about things, he wouldn't be so emotionally detached from me now. Most times I get frustrated with him. And stop talking to him, but really, I don't think our love is over yet. It may take a while to get back to where we were. But I guess I'll be patient. .. if it's what I really want.

-Tashonda

From The Beat: There's a terrific book about life and love called "The Fountainhead" where one of the best lines is "Before you can say 'I love you,' you have to be able to say the 'I'". Meaning, it's very hard to truly love another person, to give yourself to them, when you're still trying to figure out who that 'self' is. This relationship sounds like it's very important to you – but are you also paying attention to you?Tashonda, most need for yourself as you move on towards womanhood? Are you taking care of your school, your track, your confidence... all the things that will help YOU choose the best man for you?

The Things I Regret

That one thing that I really regret doing is getting into that stolen vehicle on Christmas week of 2005. If I never got into that car I would be home with my little brother and I wouldn't be in Juvenile hall right now wishing that I wasn't here.

If I didn't get in that car I wouldn't be on probation but now I really hate the fact that I've been on probation for about a year and my life hasn't been the same as it used to be. I regret a lot of things but we all have regrets. I wish that they released me soon..

I went to court for violation and they told me to come back the 17th for violation? 4 weeks in the Hall for violation? Man that shhh is hella messed up.

-Thizzy

From The Beat: Well, at least you learned that seemingly small mistakes can sometimes have big repercussions. While we know that it's not always fair, if you choose to learn the lesson this time and take it with you, you might be able to avoid enduring this life for a lot longer. Best of luck.

This Regret

I regret me not listening to my mom
I regret going outside and doing what my mom told me not to do.
I regret pulling out the pistol on that foo'.
I regret carrying my pistol everywhere I go.
Not really;
where I'm from you gotta carry it everywhere you go.
That's why I do what I do.
I regret getting in too deep in the game
but you don't ever ask yourself that when you're out there.

-Toki

From The Beat: You bring up a really important topic: the difficulty people have holding on to whatever important revelations they've had as a result of being locked up once they get out. Meaning that so many of you young folks take your time in juvie seriously; when you have so much time away from the game you start thinking and making plans for change, but once you get back out you push those thoughts out of your mind and pick up where you left off. What is it that happens and why is it so hard to ask yourself those questions when you're out there?

All the Love

The love that never dies is your family, and also the one that you fall in love with. You will always have a place in that person's heart. There's also the love that you have for yourself – and finally the love my grandmother has for me that won't ever die.

-Girly

From The Beat: Of all of these, it may well be the love you have for yourself that gets you out of the situations you've been in so far. What does it mean to love yourself – can you give us an example of something you wouldn't have done if you'd remembered to love yourself? And also an example of something that you did because you loved yourself so much? Is loving yourself (which is another way of saying you deserve to be loved) a hard thing to do?

What's Good

What's good with it Beat Within: Being in the hall is not the bizzness and another thing is that violence is like a disease. People are killing each other. To tell you the truth, I hate violence. This whole thing need to stop for reals.

-Stunna

From The Beat: We agree and bet that a lot of other readers do too. What do you think you can do to help the violence stop, when you get back on the outs? We hope that you will keep your head up and give all the Beat readers out there some ideas for a more positive way!

What I Miss Is . . .

What I miss is my mom,
even though we ain't talked in a year
she's still my mom,
what I miss is my cousin we stay tight throughout it all,
we been in and out of everything, t
hat's just like my big bra we solid,
what I miss is my girl she's been there wit' me through it all
even if I'm in the hall that's why we're so tight,
when I get out I hope to make it right,
what I miss is to do whatever I want when I want to do it,
what I miss is sleepin' out the night if I could sleep though
the night it would be so right, what I miss is my freedom
my life
so for those out there that miss like I do
change yo life before it's too late
FAST!!

-Mark

From The Beat: Man, another amazing piece. The device you use—repetition—is such a solid way to make a point. Plus, it's really lyrical and an age old poetic tool. Not only is it good writing but it says so much. All of the things that one misses when locked up—so much of it is the stuff we all take advantage of when we're free to enjoy life. Remember that when you get out, to appreciate things and work to protect your freedom.

A Good Shock

It was a shock to walk into visiting on 4/14/07 and have my ex boyfriend's mom walk up to me and wrap me in her arms in a tight hug. But what shocked me the most was looking over my shoulder and seeing her son (my childhood love) sitting with his grandma… I played it off though, smiled and called him a loser. The whole time, I couldn't stop being distracted! I haven't seen him in a while, cause last time he called me it was collect, from the old Juvenile Hall!

Now, all I seem to think about is how much fun we used to have on the outs. I miss my Lil' Shorty. I miss my baby sister. Man it sucks that all I can do is sit here and reminisce. Thinking about the old days with him makes me smile and cry (sometimes). I should be getting out on April 30th and going to a group home in Redding or LA.

-Cherry Kisses

From The Beat: This is a great reminder that you never know when, out of the blue, someone from the old days can pop up in your life when you least expect it. Now you've got even more of a reason to do well in your group home (and more of a reason not to run, no matter what!)

Another

Life is it worth what it's worth
I really don't know, but it seems like ever since birth
I been out in the hood bangin my turf
It might not hurt me but my momma be hurt
It seems like people love to hate me
Even more incriminate me
It's been like this since when I was baby
Always a real lazy youngsta but I'm crazy
But I'm waiting for change
This jail shhh is the same
'Cause of the set that I claim
They wanna have me in chains
Or even behind bars doing some time
I might just be too real they can't handle my rhymes
Or it could be the fact that I love livin' crime
But regardless what, forever I'm gonna shine
So from do womb to the tomb
I'm gonna stay wit' my goons

-Lil' Gumby

From The Beat: You don't want to hear this, but we feel sorry for you Gumby. Refusing to see a better way and setting yourself up for further misery is sad, especially when you know there is a better way to live. Stop being lazy!

Running

One day when I was with some of my friends we pulled a lick. We didn't come up on a lot but we were drunk and wanted to do something for fun. We were hitting them hella times and they started to run; they called the 5-0 and we booked hella fast. We was hopping through every fence in site.

They brought the ghetto birds out and the dogs. Finally we got on my potna street. We just posted at his house for a little bit then I went home.

A week later I went to school and was brought out and arrested and brought to Juvenile Hall for the first time.

-Kilo

From The Beat: What did you learn from the experience? Do you think it's something that'll happen again? The thing is, now that you've entered the system, you can be thrown back into juvie for doing a lot less than what you describe in this piece. Do you think you have the focus and strength to really straighten your life out?

Too Young to Die

In grieving someone's death it really don't matter how they die some people say. I believe that's not true. My grandpa died of natural causes I wasn't really struck so hard because it was his time to go I would think. But when the police shot my friend down, now that hurt more than anything because he was only twenty-two years of age.

His homeboys and his family love him as a brother, son, grandson and father. Just because the police thought he was a menace to society didn't mean they had to kill him because if it was like that then the police should kill me they probably want to too, because I'm a menace to society in their eyes too.

-Big Boy

From The Beat: Your feeding into the stereotypes Big Boy, the time is now to go in a new direction, free of violence in the name of the homie who is RIP, step away and make your family proud.

To Grieve

If I could make a phone call to someone who passed away I would call my little cousin Frank. I don't know exactly what I would say to him, but I would probably ask him what death feels like. I would probably tell him how I been taking care of things since he been gone, but I don't got much to write on this paper so I'm out. RIP Frank

-Lil' Gary

From The Beat: Seriously Gary how are you taking care of things, when you find yourself in such a position as jail? We bet Frank and those family members living want better for you.

Change

I know one OG that got out of the hood from South Central, Los Angeles. Watts. An OG who banged super hard knocking people out. He told me a story that he did drive by's, knock out missions. Then one day he got on coke and messed up his life, well his life was already messed up but he went to the pen for like 10 years got out, now he like forty-six years old. He was telling me he wasted half of his life on stupid stuff and don't follow his foot steps and change my life right now.

-Roni-Bo

From The Beat: Wow, that story must have made an impression on you. The thing is, most people when they step out of the game they realize that all of the sacrifice just isn't worth it. But it's a powerful thing when you're in it, and it's so hard to gain that perspective before it's too late or you've already wasted most of your life. There are tons of stories just like the one you heard—will you choose to learn from the experiences of others or will you make the same mistakes?

Getting Out

I want to get out of jail because I got a lot of stuff ahead of my life. I still got a lot of goals to accomplish in my life as a young black man in society. I want to have a family so I can see my kids grow up and be successful in life.

I don't want them to go through the same life I went through. I don't want my kids to be in foster homes or group homes. I don't want my kids growing up without a mother in their life. I want my kids to live a good life. So that is why I got to get out so that can happen for them.

Peace out beat this yo' boy Lil'Sam, God bless.

-Lil' Sam

From The Beat: You know Sam we are so pulling for you to succeed too! Keep us posted on your positive adventures aka life.

My Counselor, My Mom An Dad

My grieve counselor would probably be my mom and dad because when anything happens with my family and my friends they are always the ones being by my side telling me it woill be ok.

They will support me with anything. Like how I am locked up right now my parents still visiting me every visit day. Telling me we can't wait 'till you get home and how much everyone misses me.

When one of my friends died and I came home all down and didn't want to do anything they came up to me and hugged me and told me what do you feel like doing and they took me hella places to try to make me feel better but it didn't really work, but it's the thought that counts.

-Lucky Son

From The Beat: Yes indeed you are so fortunate to have parents that care and love you the way they do. Show them you mean business when you get out and handle it the way that would make them proud!

What I Do Regret Not Doing

There's a lot of things that I wish I didn't do but have no regrets for stuff I've done. However I have regrets for stuff I didn't do.

One is I regret pushing my mom to the point to where she kicked me out while I was on probation, leading me here.

Another is after I got kicked out I could have just waited at my house I was staying at instead of going to my patna's house when there was hella cops out which is how I got caught.

And last is those girls I was getting at when I was on the outs, it's like I planted a seed but didn't water. When I get back how will I know if there still on me.

-Spider Man

From The Beat: It's interesting—regrets can be looked at both ways. In any one of the situations you describe in this piece, the regret could be attributed to what you did or to what you didn't do. Essentially it's the same thing either way: your actions got you into a mess you wish you could go back and undo. The real question is, what will you do now?

The Love That Never Dies

The love that never dies is the love that I have for my baby mama she loves me with all heart and I love her because she had my baby and she is going to have another one soon. I will love her 'till I die the last time.

I saw her was when I got arrested when I was running to her and got shot in the back wit a tazor gun and she screamed my name.

She will love me 'til I die and she would do anything for me and I would do anything for her that is why our love will never die.

-Ryan

From The Beat: Lucky to have this love especially if the feeling is mutual. Now stop being selfih and step up and make her proud, make your children proud! What child wants to tell his/her classmates that their dad lives in prison!

Time

I'm in jail and I have been here for about seven months and every time I go to court it's like I go for no reason it's like I'm wasting time.

I know I did wrong and would not do it in my life time again. I know I should be doing 10 +15 years but I ask God to give me a chance at life one more time to get back to my family, wife, my friend, and basketball if I can get to one more chance I will not come back to the hall. I just don't get how people come back five to ten plus times. I just ask God to give me a chance like He did the people that keep coming back time after time.

Some time I think I am not ever going to get out but something tells me I am going to get out. I just do not know anymore I time in the hall.

-D

From The Beat: You need to put your time in the hall to good use, while you wait your fate. You need to prepare for the worse yet, plan for the day you come home. You have the smarts, use it D!

Five Years Ago . . . Five Years From Now

Five years ago I can say that's when my life really started to change, I started smoking cigarettes, because I saw my older friends smoking and I thought it was cool. I stopped smoking. Then in Middle School, I met the wrong crowd. I saw all of the cool people smoking weed and doing bad things, and doing no classwork.

So I had a best friend, he smoked weed, so I started cutting school, smoking weed, bullying lots of kids for no reasons, and I got addicted to the weed and had lots of fights. Five years from now, I should be in college or some type of business like mechanic or construction worker, or painter, or designer for houses or cars. Since car engines have changed in the last 20 years, I would design cars, or paint houses.

I'm sure if I put in a hundred percent effort I can do really really well. I am a C average, but I also get B's and A's if I try a little bit. When I get out I'm going to quit smoking weed and get a job and save up lots of money and try a lot harder in school.

-Ryan

From The Beat: You look young, but you wrote old and wise. You've learned some of the hardest lessons of life and the evils of trying to fit in at a very early age, and now you'll have a second chance out there to try and beat back those messed up habits. But how? The so-called cool kids will always be there (though after doing time it might be they don't seem so cool anymore) so you will have to rely on your inner strength and belief in yourself so you can carve out your own path and not just follow theirs. How will you do this? What will be your tool? What will you need? New hobbies? A program? New Friends? Sports? Once you "arm yourself" for your time out there, you'll be a lot more confident that you can triumph on your second go.

My Thoughts On Guns

I think we should change the laws and let people have guns with them at all times for protection. Guns are very easy to get. I can buy a gun in about an hour with some friends al I have to do is call and tell him what I'm looking for. The cost of a gun depends on what kind of gun depends on what kind of gun you want. It is really easy to get a semi automatic weapon. The first time I ever saw a gun was at my house. I was with my uncle.

-Martin

From The Beat: A lot of people share your point of view. The Second Amendment of the U.S. Constitution gives citizens the right to bear arms. But comparison studies of different countries (Canada and a lot of European countries have strict gun control laws) have shown that homicide and suicide rates are higher when guns are readily available. Plus, there are a lot of accidental shootings that take place when children have access to a gun in their home. What is the right balance between self-defense and public safety? Do we really want to live in a "wild west" kind of society where everyone has to defend themselves alone?

Peace For Aunt Sally

How we can't teach peace through violence, because it be to much shooting, fighting, killing, it's just too much stuff going on.

Like three months ago my auntie get shot in her head by violence, by some thugs shooting at each other and she didn't do anything wrong, she was just walking home from work.

Right now if I can do anything, anything, to have her back in my life so when I get out of jail I'm go' try to make peace in this world. Today a peacemaker! I think that she will like that too, to want me to try to make people like each other and all get along with each other for nobody will get hurt and die like she did. Rest In Peace Aunt Sally.

-Piolontei

From The Beat: Such a tragedy. We are so sorry for the loss. We know your dream would make Aunt Sally proud, we hope you do your part to bring peace to the neighborhoods.

Pistols

I first seen one of them pistols when I was like four or five.
I aint really know what they was though
my first time bustin' a thang was when I was seven.
My pops let me do the damn thing in the back yard.
Guns is a part of my life, they gotta be it's '07.
Now a new generation of ninjas is on the streets
now they don't want to fight no more they about bustin' thangs.
It aint like I won't fight you, but if you want to start shootin
I can do that too!

-Ray Ray

From The Beat: Scary and tragic how this world/our community has gotten so out of control.

When I Became Stranger

In 2001 when I lost my grandpa it was one of the worst times in my life. When I found out he was dead, apart of me died inside of me and I didn't know what to do, so I decided to go on a rampage I just started to lose it I didn't care about anybody including myself that's when I started using drugs and doing what I wanted to do. Over the years it stuck with me to this day. I still feel a little part of me is still dead.

-Stranger

From The Beat: We are sorry for the loss of your grandpa. What do you think your grandpa would say about your behavior? Where do yo ugo from here? Any plans?

Right now

Right now in my life I feel like everything is against me. I use to love my livin', now I hate it. I'm going through things elder people ain't went through, and nobody understand me, or don't know my pain. They could only say and think they know. My problems is nothing small, all big, only thing about these problems they keep comin', and I haven't even got rid of the first ones.

I'm going to destruction so I stay prayin', waitin' on the day when I get lifted from destruction. I feel like a mouse in a maze lookin' for cheese only there is no cheese. Every wall in the maze that looks like a way out I go for it. Lookin' for help and help seems like it's nowhere to be found. I'm an in frangible person and strong, the time I been waitin' for something good to come. I've got something good also, I learned a little about everything, when I say everything I mean it. So right now in my life is nothing but soon well be.

-Marcus

From The Beat: What did you love about your past, that now you hate? You need to take positive chances, get yourself back in school, avoid the hood if you can and focus on living a life free of drama!

What's Up Beat!

Guns, people use guns to kill people they don't like or other because they are scared to fight.

Most people lost loved ones over a gun, there would be less killings if there weren't none, but their would be less killings if there weren't none, but their would be a lot of stabbings or beatings and people's hearts would still stop beating. I think that violence would never stop, theirs violence everywhere in the world people getting lit up.

RIP to the fallen up there living it up.

-O

From The Beat: It's true, violence does seem to be a part of human nature. But at least if there weren't as many guns around, we wouldn't have drive-by's or people getting shot over arguments or in the heat of the moment. If violence is here to stay, what do you think you can do to make sure that you and your loved ones don't become victims of violence?

She Needs Her Daddy!

I was on the run for several weeks. I did one thing I've been wanting to do I saw my baby's mama and my daughter. I just want to say I love them both very much that's why I'm glad I go locked up 'cause I really want to finish my time so I can finally be with my lady and my baby, she's six months old she needs a daddy and I want to be in her life.

I was so wrapped up in gangbanging but now it's all about my baby and my lady I just want to be with them I want to be with my family.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: We hope you get to see your lady and your baby daughter soon. You're right, they both need you right now and they need you to forget the gangbanging and to focus on being a provider for your family. You can do it (even if it means moving away from your hood for awhile or saying goodbye to some old habits). Remember your goals.

Easy Access

Guns are easily obtainable so that when people can be on the outs and look for people to buy guns from the community. Many gang members like to proclaim they have guns but they don't even be having nothing. These dudes are what we call exposing the realities f a society that wants to be accepted as tough. These dudes want to try to act like they don't know how to fight when you step to them.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: That's a good observation: sometimes people want to seem like they're all hard or dangerous, so they lie about having a weapon. If people think you have a gun, it carries a lot of weight on the streets. Why would someone do this? Probably either to intimidate other people into doing what they want or maybe to avoid a fight. Anyway, your piece is insightful. It takes guts to step outside of the gangsta culture and observe things as they really are.

Guns

Yeah I would say that I have carried a gun. The first time I seen a gun was wit my brother and it was his gun he had a 9mm Smith & Weston it was nice.

I think guns are not bad just the wrong people gets their hands on one it's all bad because gun don't kill people, people kill people.

I wouldn't say that they are easy to get or expensive. Now I would use a gun if one of my love one or homies got shot. But I wouldn't do no random shooting or over a girlfriend.

-Lil' Al

From The Beat: Keep thinking this one through, especially your thoughts on seeking revenge if something bad happened to someone close. Think about how this would further plague our communities and your own family with you in prison for life and another loss life, if not yours.

RIP Sister

If I could get in touch with my sister she died 2004.
Her death made people go a little crazy.
The reason because she was an angel to everyone.
She helped people solve things,
help me and my little brothers with things around my home.
She was a straight "A" student.
She was a big sister to everybody.
The lost made me want to do stupid stuff like rob, steal,
shoot at people,
run from the cops. This was a big lost.

-Lil' Reese

From The Beat: How have you grown up since she has been RIP? Would your sister be proud of you today? Why or why not?

I'm a Soldier

I wish you could feel my pain
walk a day in my shoes and my life ain't no game
I ain't got no rules,
Fools tryin to assassinate me on the streets
like Martin Luther King or JFK
and when I go out I want my own Veteran's Day
I'm a soldier but soldier or not I don't want to go out at a young age
or go out like my people and get hit with a gage
I feel like I'm going in a rage.

-Jesus Coleon

From The Beat: Plan to live a long life. Get yourself on a new hype, a hype that speaks about living life successfully. You do not need to be a part of the streets! IN your next piece tell us about your pain and why you think it has gotten to the point where young people are attempting to kill one another.

Sixth Grade And The End Of Innocence

My innocence was gone at Carter, my sixth grade year. I wasn't a total mess-up, but this was when I started drifting off, turning into a young man, doing the most. Me and my brother used to take guns to school and keep them in our locker because my brothers used to faithfully get into it, with these fools from the 'town.

They didn't used to really start nothin' with the dudes, we was just from the other side of town, and me and my brothers used to just be our dumb ass selves, and do hella stuff. Back then there used to be hella stuff back then.

There used to be conflict between youngstas from the West and youngstas from the East. I started cutting school and shooting dice for lunch money. That's when my urge to play wit' girls really kicked in ...yeah, them Carter days was the days.

Things got a lot worse, and now we're in these days.

-Lil' Tonio

From The Beat: This like one more piece of the puzzle that helps us see a clear picture of how you came to be young person we've met in the Halls. And it answers some questions but opens the door to more: Like what were the elder people in your family thinking parents thinking while this was going on. Who was at home, trying to keep you in line? And now that you're in "these days" and have new days coming up, how will you find better things to do with your time, things that will help you leave the nightmares behind and make the dreams come true?

What Do You Regret Doing Or Not Doing!!

I regret that I came to the hall cause somebody was looking at me sideways so I hit him and I went through his pockets for the hell of it so they got me for robbery. I regret that because he was just looking at me and I beat him up and robbed him for no reason and now I feel sorry for him.

-Abo

From The Beat: That's a big violation my friend. We hope you feel bad, and we hope you will only learn to keep your hands to yourself. Violence doesn't solve a damn thing!

Thoughts on Hate

I'm something like a hater, 'cause I rob people and when I see a ninja shine, I go bad and strip 'em fast, but I get hated on for who I am and what I do, or bang, or who I mess with, but really everybody in the world, it ain't nobody who is not gon' hate on you when you locked up, cause it's in somebody's blood. That's how everybody gets killed in the city I'm in. But it's just this: The West funk with the East, the South, funk with the north, the North hates on Berkeley...

But at the end, nobody won't get money, everybody either get killed. Me I hate on every race, I rob everybody I see, from Oakland to Last Vegas. I lost a lot of family and friends from people hating. The police be hatin' – they killed my bra. So now I'm go stay hatin' the police since that happened to me. ... the way I see it, if he got this and I got that I'ma hate and take it.

-Rece

From The Beat: One thing we never touched on when we talked about hating in the unit was the way that hating almost seems like a virus, something that makes its way across the ghetto streets like an extra-deadly flu. All this hating is almost for now reason-- it seems like just part of an endless cycle of violence, revenge, envy, and it always seems to end in spilled blood, spilled tears. You've been infected with it as well, with all you've seen and lost, but you also seem to have a very clear view of this virus, you diagnose it with he wise eye of a trained doctor. What do you think would be the cure, Dr. Dede? What would it take to end the hating? First in yourself, then in our community? And don't you need to start with the hate you feel?

Hatin' on the Next . . .

A hater to me is when a ninja just don't like you. A ninja that always wants to do better than you. When he see you got something, he always try to steal it.

But anyways, I catch myself hating sometimes, like when I see a car on 24s I say, "I'm gonna take it." But now I say, why take from the next ninja who might be just like you, tryin' to come up? I just look at it this way. Why take something from some ninja who worked hard to get what he got? I mean ninjas just need to work hard, and they can have nice stuff too.

Oh yeah, haters is ninjas who are always worried about the next ninja when he need to be worrying about himself. A ninja that's just mad so he try and act hard. All I got to say is a ninja always talkin' to get down. He needs to wake up, 'cause hard ninjas don't last on the streets, 'cause they always end up getting killed.

-Turk

From The Beat: Not everyone that answered this question took the trouble to really look within and ask themselves whether they too had moments of being haters. You showed some real honesty by stepping up and looking inside, which is pretty much the hardest thing for a human being to do. You've seen those signs on stores that say "Hate Free Zone." What would it look like if we tried to make our streets -- and our hearts -- "Hate Free Zones?"

My Real, Five Years Forward, Five Years Back

Five years ago, I was twelve, and I was on the block. I sued to wake up early in the mornin' to be on the block, tryin' to get it and say, screw school. I ain't made for school, 'cause I love money. I did anything to have some money in my pocket, money made me feel good about myself cause I know I can get and buy everything I want.

Right before I was goin in my house, I turned around to look down the block to see if my brother was comin' home and before I called it a night, just before my eyes, I heard gun shots. I took one to the chest and fell back to the ground, and when I was on the ground, all I could think of was my family and what did I do to deserve this. After that I heard screamin' and voices saying get up, get up, but I couldn't. I couldn't see nothin' but red and black. When I woke up, I was in the hospital.

Five years from now, I still might be in jail, and five years after that, I still might be in jail. But five years after that, I might be out, if I'm blessed, when I get out I want to have a wife and try to raise a family and be successful on what I put my heart and faith on .

-J-Money

From The Beat: In a way, reading this terrifying story makes us almost relieved that you're in jail right now (not that we want you away for the next five years, that's not what we mean). It seems like when you had that first horrorshow when you got shot, you were maybe too young and caught up to really think about what it meant. It could have been a wake-up call, but you weren't listening and you just hurt snooze. But now you're a much older and a wiser person, and you've had a wakeup call that no one can ignore, and when you get out you'll still be alive to tell the tale. You say "If I'm blessed" but the fact that you're alive after such a close call means you already are blessed!

Eternal Love

The love that never dies is for my family. I feel like my love died in a way, a part of me was permanently scared till my death and I feel this inside of me everyday.

I know my circumstance that I speak upon is a painful way to live. I been in pain to the point where others believe I'm numb to it, because it's been going on inside of me for so long.

I was told my last name was cursed and that I believe. I'm a lone in my mind with war with my surrounding poverty and shady reality hits you I know how that feels. I wonder everyday how did we get here? I understand though that's a question that can't be answered while my spirits trapped in my body but to believe in a creator of life.

I wonder what's all the aliens on other planets believe? Do they live with God? Is God their name or a creator.

Live it how ever you choose. Even if all your love dies. I'm only a young teen.

-Lil' Y

From The Beat: If you feel that you are cursed, or that your name is cursed, then you need to put in some positive work to make a healthy name for yourself. Try school! Try sports! Try work! Live life in a healthy way and break the cycle!

Oakland And Virginia Tech

What's up, Beat. This is Lil Guy up here, at this bootsie ass camp, what I want to know is why they made it a big deal in the newspaper for the people in Virginia and in Oakland they don't care, they just put it in the paper and it was another shooting in Oakland today.

-Lil' Guy

From The Beat: That's a good question. Why does it seem as we as a society value some lives more than others? We pay more attention to Paris Hilton than to our own neighbors, and more important to the wars on tv than the real war in Iraq. More young people were shot to death in Oakland last year than on that day in Virginia Tech, and there wasn't exactly a lot of nationwide coverage. But it's easy to blame the media. The real question should be: What have we done to make noise about the shootings? And better yet: What can we do to fix it.

I, Calvin, Regret . . .

...not being ambitious enough for High School, so I could have graduated on time with my year. I also regret not being able to go to High School dances all the way to the prom.

I recall being chased by the police back in 2004, when I stole a golf cart for no apparent reason, and was roaming free until I got by the freeway, and got chased by highway patrol, so I got on, left the cart and everything. I hopped a couple fences then dipped under a bridge to let it coo' down. Then I went down.

I didn't get caught but hopefully in the future a situation like that will not occur again.

-Calvin

From The Beat: It sucks that you've missed so many milestones so far, from graduate school to the prom... and like you, we hope that nothing like that happens again. You have a right to ambitions – for a great life, a great future, great experiences. But when you say "Hopefully, that will not occur again," it sounds as if you feel like that is out of your control. And the truth is you can control a lot about your future, about what you do in different situations. Are you ready to take that control? Peace.

Guns Are Like Toys

Guns are part of my life. Where I am from, guns are like toys. Everybody has one, it's really easy to get one. I have one, all my friends have one. And most of my family has one. We have them for protection because nobody fights anymore.

A gun can make anybody superman, and it can make the smallest person the biggest man or woman. Anybody can shoot a gun, even a kid. Like that three-year-old kid that killed his uncle with a 38 special. All I am saying is that you don't have to be a big man or woman to shoot a gun. You just have to have a hand and a gun.

-Skarface

From The Beat: This is such a well-written piece, and you capture exactly the horrible appeal of guns. They make you feel strong, they make you feel powerful. But our point of view is different: Guns don't actually protect people. Instead, they set you up to be a victim of someone else's bullet, they make you feel all-powerful, they make you go into life threatening situations. Do you think it's a coincidence that the places with the most guns are also the ones with the most homicides? No, as protected as they may make people feel, a kid with a gun is LESS safe than a kid without one... not to mention the fact that so many young people in the hall are just here for gun charges. Maybe you disagree with us, if you do, write a response to this response, and of course, we will gladly print it.

Guns

Guns cause death,
were I come from people get guns before they fight,
then they wait 'till night
do a drug that they cant fight off
then soon or later the guns go off
then when mom get home they hear their son is gone,
now she's crying, now she's dying inside,
guns
now it's to somebody else's head.

-I hate guns

From The Beat: And how does it stop?

I'm Gonna Be Something In Life

I regret putting my hands on my baby mama when y'all she was tryin' to do it keep me out of here, but knowing me I didn't care. Now look at me up in the hall doing this weak ass time but I am not mad 'cause when I got out I know next time not to put my hands on my baby mama.

I go to court next week, hope to get out and go back to school, and finish, this your boy last year in school and I am trying to pass and go to college.

I'm gon' be something in life.

-Regret For Real

From The Beat: It's a painful thing to face up to realize that we've hurt someone we care about. But here you are, manning up and writing about it on paper. Congratulations for your honesty. Is that what you were locked up for, or was it for something else? Like you say, you want to BE something in life, and so what will you need to do to make that happen? Do you need tutors, advisors, parenting workshops, and – if you think that anger is still inside you – a program to help you make sure you never hit the mother of your baby again? All these things will help you make a fresh start.

RIP

RIP to my Uncle Danny he died seven years ago today because he was honking the horn at somebody and they shot him. I miss him a lot because he influenced me the right way and now he is gone.

If I got a phone call to the afterlife I would call him just to hear his voice. Since he left, the family was never the same. I miss him so much I wish he was still here.

-Ryan

From The Beat: This is so tragic. We are so sorry for the loss of your uncle. You don't know who you are dealing with these days when you cut someone off or honk the horn of your car. What do you miss most about Danny?

Your First Time

Jail is not a place anybody wants to be this is my first time here and it's everything I never wanted to see. Being in jail is horrible I don't advise no one to come if you never been here don't ever put your mind to it and that's from a first timer.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: That's very good advice from a first timer. Most people don't get it on their first time. What do you think sets you aside from the rest? We can tell you're very wise, but let us know what experiences made you that way...

Tears Of Regret

I regret being away from my family
I regret being here.
I'm always in tears hopefully I get out of here
I'm tired of being in tears
I been here so long
I'm tired of being away from home,
home sweet home I regret.

-Aladen

From The Beat: Well, what's the plan to stay home and away from

My Regrets

I regret doing what got me put in here. That was one of the stupid things to do because it wasn't worth it and I didn't get nothin' out of it. It was all a waste of time, and now I can't be with my family and I'm stuck here and I can't do nothin' about that.

Being here in Juvenile Hall makes me think about a lot of things 'cause I can't do what I want, when I want. When I'm in my room, I think about what all my family is doing and what all my potnas is doing and sometimes I think so much that I start stressin' a lot because so many things are going through my mind.

-Steven

From The Beat: You wrote a short piece here, but it didn't need to be one word longer, because it was such a great description of how being locked up can upset a person – but also, how you can turn it into a good things. Like you say, now that you're in Juvenile Hall you're thinking all the time, thinking about family and friends and, we hope, all the steps that led to your making your bad decision in the first place. Usually, the thing people get put in jail for is step five or six of several bad decisions in a row: A person skips class instead of going, or goes to a party they shouldn't be at, or drinks or pops a pill, and then all the other bad stuff flows from that first bad decision. Is that what happened to you? And if you look back, does thinking about that first bad decision help you plan for how to live your life safer when you get out? If so, write about that next week – all about that first bad decision.

Home Sweet Home

Damn I been here so long
Gone away from my throne
Not been able to go home
Damn my baby gone
Gone I wish I was gone
I'm gone away from home
My mama, daddy, grannie
I'm all alone
We think it's fun, always being away from home, Look where we at.
Yeah we long away from home
For gone away in the twilight zone
Thought that patron had you on
Man it's time to go home- not far from the twilight zone
-Turquoise From The Beat: The bad news is that you're not at home, as this beautiful poem -- half blues, half lullaby -- lets us know with its sad rhythms. But the good news is that now probably see home in a whole new light... They say "you don't know what you got till it's gone" but all the things you miss at home and in the free world will still be waiting for you when you get out. Wear this poem close to your heart, so that you remember it when you finally go -- home.
You Don't Know The Deal
How you gon' tell me how I feel
and you don't know the deal?
how you gon' tell me how to behave
When you don't know my pain
You're not me
Man I'm tired of this
Y'all doin' nothing but puttin' me through stress
Food this ain't no game when you don't know my pain,
you're not me.
Talking about me 'cause I got a skin rash
I bet you I've got mo' money than yo' ass
Guess what, me and my mom flew on this plane
She knew my pain
But she wasn't me.
To some people I'm not perfect like y'all, so I'm not balanced
But ninja, I'm a Libra, and I got lots of talent.
Let me tell you something, y'all fools is hell a lame, you don't hurt
me with these rude comments, like "you blacks" "your burnt," "you look
like an oil spill, but so what if I do? I got a heart and I think I'm
beautiful, but you'll never know because you don't know my pain and
you're sure not me.
I'm Africa

-Tajanik

From The Beat: It's crazy how people can cut each other up with words.... but you hold your own in this poem. Still, why would having money be something to be proud of or ashamed of? Does money make the person? Everyone in The Hall is going through a lot of the same stress, so it's no use turning on each other when actually while you're in there, you are all you have. But in the meantime, you just hold onto your proud rhymes, bide your time, and be your own truest sign.

I Feel

...like killing myself. Do you? Why do I feel like this? I don't have no goddamned dad. He got killed. You don't know how I feel. Each day I live on the line, I don't have a dime.

-Anon

From The Beat: We remember when you wrote this piece, we were a little bit worried about you. But since then you've seemed a lot more positive, and you know, it's very few people in this world who don't feel low like you did sometimes... especially when they have to face a loss like you did. But the ones who overcome those dark moods are the ones who reach out and express what they're going through, the way you did right here... And since then you've had brighter days. It's pretty amazing how just letting other people know how you feel can make those feelings a little easier to bear, even on lockdown. Keep sharing!

Why Not Fists?

Guns might not become peace because guns are valuable and unstoppable for killing. Nobody can stop a gun terrorist. My hood is compared to what gangs do, they destroy whatever they like to pull their triggers. No one can stop it, not even the cops. And if there were no guns in America, they would still use a knife, a machete, tools, even a chainsaw.

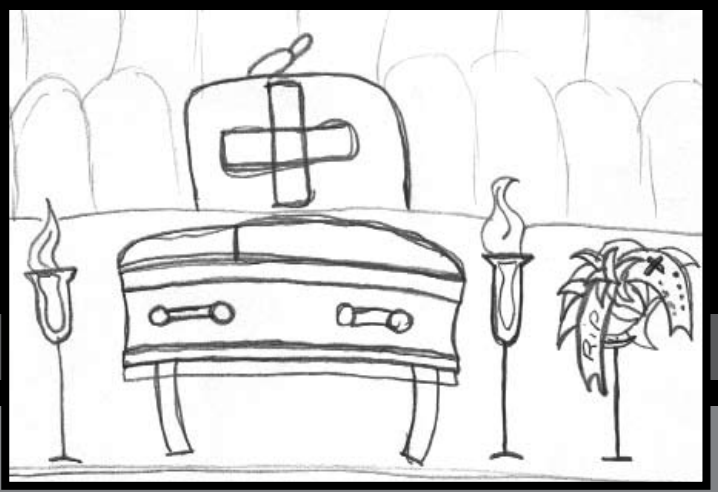
They using, it doesn't stop them because people can think their way

out of weapons. My opinion is that guns or people keep killing whether they do or not. Still couldn't stop of weapon because people in America keep buying them. I wonder why people do keep buying the weapons for what to use if they already have their own weapon? What about a fist? My true weapons is my fist -- it's a weapon better than deadly weapons, whether they call it or not. A fist is a weapon, no

need for guns. You feel me? Fists are a weapon, from Mac Dre's saying that, he would feel the same way.

-Dizzy Birdman

From The Beat: It's true that the technology of guns has made it all too easy to kill without thinking, and worse, to feel invincible when you're not. You're wrong when you think your fists are your best weapons. The best weapon is always the mind. Especially when it's yours. (Or Mac Dre's!)



Marley's Blues

I make beats wit' my heat when I'm out in the streets
But now I'm in The Hall without a gun at all,
So I write to The Beat
And bring heat with my ink
They call me Marley don't shoot 'em
On the out
But now I wish I was on the outs
Now bein' in here makes me mad
And my loved ones sad
'Cause I commit crimes to get things I never had;
But what I wish I really had was a dad
But f' that ninja cause I never had
That bitch ass dad
But all right Beat Within I'm gonna get at you next week; and all you convicted felons stay safe and out this place.

-Marley

From The Beat: Frankly, we think your words are a much better weapon than any gun. Like you say, you bring heat with your ink... and your lines crackle with anger – and insights. You didn't have a father, maybe there are other things you lost too. On the other hand, it's sort of a tradeoff for your other gifts. You have your intelligence, you have your verbal skills, you have your dreams for something better. What you do with those gifts, is up to you though, right?

The Hood

Forget the hood they got me livin' like a pigeon
Just close my eyes I can picture how I'm livin'
My mom told me I can't live off the hood
I say maybe I can't maybe I could
But life to me ain't never gone be fair
I can see my future flowin' away in the air
That's only reason I stair

-Marco

From The Beat: Mom knows best! Trust your mother as hard as it is! Life will feel a whoel lot fairer, if you live it right! Right is getting out of the sytem and staying in school and off the street!

My Regret

I been in and out of juvenile since I was 12 years old.
I want to change my life around
I want to be a better person.
I got chased and shot at
that was a scary feeling
as I was running I was thinking how I am going to get away.

-Lil' Boy

From The Beat: One way to avoid the bullets and the drama is to live life differently. Start by stepping up and going to school, and following yoru rules of probation!

She Makes Me Want To Be Somebody

My girlfriend is the most important thing to me in the world. My love for her is so special, and I can't imagine my life without her. She is so beautiful, like an angel. She is so special to me, I would do absolutely anything for that girl. Whenever I'm going through some tough stuff, she always knows how to comfort me.

She makes me want to do something with my life, to be somebody. When I'm with her, everything is perfect and right. This girl really is my everything. My life would be so empty if she wasn't there anymore. I plan on being with her forever, and she feels the same. We've made it through so
much, and we have been together so long. She is my one and only.

Valentina, I love you so much, I miss you baby.

-Jake

From The Beat: Love is an incredibly powerful thing, and your writing here is a powerful testimony to the way that love can help us find the strength to live well. Remember though, that if she makes you want to do better, it's because she speaks to the strong part inside you that can and will live a positive life. That part of you belongs to you and you alone. She wouldn't be able to bring it out if it weren't already there. And the opposite is true too. Even if you lost her, that part of yourself would still be there, you would still be able to do something with your life, to be somebody. That strength is yours, and yours alone, just as her strength is hers, and hers alone.

What It Do Beat?

Hey Beat this is your girl coming from them Oakland st well I'm back this time I am not going to another group home they are going to send me to CYA for 2 years. I don't know when they are gonna send me there but it is not where I want to go I wan to go home not to go CYA because they said it is not the place to go I hope I can just go to another group home to be with my family and my sister and my other people that I want to see if they let me go home I will just do good and stay away from people that I can't hang out with and stay with my family and just do my time up in this juvenile hall so I can go home and just kick it with my big sister and her baby so I can see my boyfriend and hangout with him and my sister.

-Baby Girl

From The Beat: We hope you get to go to another group home too. But if not, what do you think you need to do in order to prepare for CYA? Do you think you need to prepare at all? Well, from what we heard about YA, it's really about strengthening your mind because there are a lot of mind games down there. Well, let's not focus on the worst case scenario, we hope your hate for incarceration can keep you out of jail.

I Love You Sister

What's up beat! I love my sister so much. Sister I think about you everyday I just miss you so much. I been locked up for a month and a half. I got you in my mind every time I'm in here beating the time I hope I get out to see you soon I just want to hug you and kiss you and spend time with you. I hope you don't follow the same steps as your big sister. I love you! I miss you!

-Muñeca

From The Beat: This is a great piece to your sister. Do you think you'll feel that way once you get out and start spending a lot of time with her? Or do you feel like you'll be able to keep the feeling of missing your sister as inspiration to get out and do the right thing? We hope everything works out for you and next time can you explain why you and your sister or so close?

A Poem Dedicated To My Darling Prince Charming B,

People always say things like do you ever feel like getting away from it all?
Away from the worries of the rush about days that always seem to be?
I know that I do I need something in life that is solid and secure
And some place I can escape to where I can close out any worries
And open up to more peaceful things.
I'm luckier than a lot of people I guess
For I have found some place I can go
Where my heart is always happy to be
And where I have some one I can turn to,
Some one who is an essential part of me,
And the best part of all is that all I have to do...
Is just come home to you. Because of you...
I've stopped running away from love;
I no longer want to live inside myself.
I want to live within you to respond to you
And to grow from your response to me.
I never want to shut you out of my life
Because you are the best thing that's ever happened to me.

-Nicole

From The Beat: Careful, careful now... with new restraints at The Beat we've been forced to be a little more critical of love poems because we would like you to teach us something. But we kept yours because you're teaching us about what it is that makes you tick. Is your darling prince charming keeping in touch with you? Will your love for him be enough to keep you out of jail?

Lessons

It's possible to teach peace through violence, because violence brings regret and sorrow. You learn lessons when you get hurt. You can also learn from past mistakes.

But then again there are some people who never learn, and that's why I feel world peace will never be achieved, as sad as it sounds.

-Lemmings

From The Beat: Unfortunately, we have to agree with you about the impossibility of achieving world peace. But at least you can bring some degree of peace to your own life by avoiding the situations that lead to violence, and the weapons that carry it out.

Life

I want to have a good life an' stay out of trouble with my friends, and stop do bad stuff. See me, I want to get a job and be good for the rest of your life. Don't be in jail for the rest your life.

I try to have a good life with my family. I want to have family with the kind and work at construction work and have my house to myself. Anyway, I love my mom and dad in my sister and brother.

-Raymond

From The Beat: What are you going to do when one of your friends wants you to do something that you know can lead you to trouble? Will you have the courage to say, "No, I don't want to go back to that place"? We hope so, because just wanting to stay out of trouble is not enough. It requires a real effort to stay in school and not to do the things you know you should not be doing. But you have good goals in your life, and there is no reason why you can't achieve them, if you put your mind to it.

Finally Made it

To the homies that made it out the 'hood and that are livin' good
For the young homies that are out all day hustlin' that yay
you'll make it with the OG's one day
The OGs don't make it that far
They might have money, jewelry and cars
There's always those ninjas hatin' it 'cause you makin' it
Those OGs only made it six feet deep
They made it to death
But at least they made it out
They made it out the game
They made it to the place where
There ain't no ninjas after you
Where there ain't no hatin'
No greed no selfishness
They made it to death
But at least they made it out, a'ight

-Symone

From The Beat: It's a terrible comment about the society we live in when a young woman of your age sees death as the only sanctuary, the place where no one chases and there's no hating. Is there nothing in between the life of hate and violence that so many young people are forced to live, and the permanent peace that death brings? Don't you have your own goals and plans about how to achieve them that move you away from the 'hood and the lock-ups? What are your goals? What are your plans?

Stop Being A Hater

To my haters: I'm finally gonna speak my mind. I don't mean to disrespect you 'cause I used to call you my older sister. But I and everyone else knows you be hating too much. You try to ruin everything for me and my friends with your drama. You always try to get attention to yourself.

But it's all good 'cause no one's trippin' off you. Even though you try to mess it all up for us, we're all gonna show you that we'll succeed no matter what.

-Pookie Babie

From The Beat: We don't know who you are addressing, but you did it in a very respectful and serious way, so we have no objections to printing it. We hope, whoever the object of your words is, reads what you've written and hears what you're saying.

Out Of The Struggle

I'm saluting my uncle who made it out of the struggle
Who died from a gangsta and gave away to a hustle
A strong man in his own right
Hard times not nice
Many years locked up life wasted not good.
I'm saluting what he did and what he done
Raised his kids, went to college, looked back but he never picked up a gun
I'm saluting his past and I'm saluting the present
The fact he living real good and not a peasant
He done came a long way from the ghetto to a role model
And my second half father, man, he an OG
I remember his last year in the game
How he said he was through before he went insane
Now what's left is this: he's 50 and he an OG, even better
For the fact he kept his chedder

-Quad B

From The Beat: We're so sorry you lost this special person, your uncle. If he could sit with you right now for a few minutes, do you think he would encourage you to continue down the path that he was traveling (and which ultimately took his life), or would he be telling you to think about your life very carefully, and make those choices that will lead you out of the system and into a brighter future?

The Love I Had That I Lost

The love you have for your brother or sister is special. To talk to them one day and just never talk to them again is devastating. It's like I had to push myself to move forward.

I feel like since my brother is gone, I have nobody to look up to, so I keep getting in trouble in jail again. This time I will make a change for my bra! RIP John John. Your love for me will never be forgotten as well as the love I have with you.

-NeNe

From The Beat: When a death occurs in the family — especially when it happens unnaturally due to violence — it shatters your entire world. We're sorry this has happened to you, and we admire you for pushing forward with your life. We hope you move in that positive direction that takes you away from places like this because the longer you live, the longer you will keep John John's memory alive.

Being Chased

When I was on the run, it felt like I was basically being chased by everyone except for a few people. I had the cops going after me and it made me so paranoid. I had friends calling me non stop telling m my family was looking for me. When I dropped by school sometimes, some of my friends would tell me that their houses were raided and police were starting to question people at my school that they thought knew me. My friends would tell me that my cousins kept calling them to look for me.

Quite a few of my friends turned their backs on me and reported to my school that I was on the run. She told the cops where I've been staying. That made so much drama go on, plus I didn't feel "safe" anywhere. Not even in my friends' houses. I only trusted four people at he time. Til this day, they still have my back no matter what. I got caught up in the end though, by my cousins, but not by the cops.

-Pookie Babie

From The Beat: You really caught yourself up, PB. It wasn't your cousins or the cops or your friends or the school, it was you. And when you look at it, you should be able to see how many people your actions affected, how many people you forced into situations they didn't want to be in because you were only thinking of yourself. Now that you see that all you did was run into the system's tight grip, what changes are you planning to make in your life when you get out of here? Do you think you owe any of these people anything? Do you owe yourself anything? What?

My Love That Will Never Die

Whats up Beat? This Tiff, aka Imani. Man, when I got out of here the first time, I got together with a childhood friend. Over the past seven months we have developed a love, that I know will never die. I know this for a fact. I know for a fact that our love won't die because that's my best friend, my fatherly figure, my love, my life. He makes me so happy

Just knowing someone that cares for you, sometimes that's enough. To make that feeling complete for me is knowing that it's for real. I never met anybody that would really tell me, "You know, them ain't yo' true friends," or "You need to go to class." Man, I swear if I had listened to my baby right now I wouldn't be here in these four-wall cells! That right, there is a love that will never die!

-Imani

From The Beat: It sounds like you've found a very, very special person, a true friend in the sense that he won't lead you into danger or let you lead yourself there. You say that if you had listened to him, you wouldn't be in the situation you're in right now, so our question has to be: Why didn't you listen to him? When you get out of here, what's going to be different this time?

Life Or Death

Life or death is what I scream 'til my head hurt
Letting other squad know better be on alert
And that it's all bad if I see on the turf
So if you out there slippin' you goin' get mirked
People really choose life or death over money
Life is more important so what is funny
Because money don't matter if you got a good if life
When greed takes over it's nothing nice
But life or death we going to ride out
No matter how much you resist you'll know what life all about
Life or death you go in a ditch
But life comes in different ways so you can switch
Some poor some rich, some solid some snitch, some don't and some get
But one thing I know life is better off legit
Would we change if we knew death was tomorrow
For all the bad we done would we sorrow
No matter what life or death keep it lit
Be yourself ever if you aint shhh
I'm gone stay safe and solid

-Too Militant

From The Beat: Death is the one experience we all know we face. But how we live until our time comes is what counts. No one knows what happens after death, but if your life and deeds determine your afterlife, are you satisfied with how you're living? If not, what are you doing to change those aspects of your life that you aren't satisfied with? We hope that staying "safe and solid" for you includes a powerful desire to get as much education as you can so that you can spread your wings. Do you intend to finish high school and go to college. We want to encourage you to do just that, because it's obvious you have a lot to offer. So, don't cheat yourself and us by thinking you already know all you need to know. Keep growing and keep sharing.

My Regrets

Everyone regrets something they do or did. Me, I regret a lot of things in my life, from stupid decisions to very stupid actions. Regrets come and go, but we all have to deal with it whether we like it are not.

Regret is something we can love or hate. Everything happens for a reason. If you do bad, karma will come back to you sooner are later, and you'll regret ever doing it in the first place. Learn by your mistakes, change your ways, and make a difference in both your life and the lives around you.

-Chowsee

From The Beat: If doing bad promises to bring you bad karma, then doing good must bring good karma. So, what good things are you planning in your own life to balance out the mistakes you regret? Regret only has value if it leads to better decisions in the future.

"Your Son Just Died"

You might think guns are tight
What if a dude just starts a fight
One shot and you take his life
Can't sleep through the whole night
He's dead gone with nothing to say
Ambulance came and took him away
Family's told their son just died
Gotta tell the cops these lies
Walking at night through the street
Dudes, homies come packin' heat
Start fillin' your body with lead
Next thing you know, mom's told your dead

-Curry Chicken

From The Beat: No, we don't think guns are tight, but we do think this poem is tight! We hope these fine words mean that you don't carry a gun, because the evidence is pretty strong that guns don't offer the protection most young people think they do, but only put their lives in greater danger.

I Regret

I regret doing what I did to get here. I regret what I did, and I'm sure I will get over it. I regret listening to my cousin into telling me to come with him instead of going to play basketball. I also regret not going home. Being here, I realized that me as a smart individual, I should be able to make my own choices as a young man. But where it got me, now I wish that I could go back in time and stop what happened. But until then I regret not going to school.

-Timo

From The Beat: Of course, Timo, none of us can ever go back and redo the past. But if we're smart (and you appear to be), then we can use those past mistakes to guide us into a better future. Saying no to homies or family can be the hardest thing we ever have to do, but it can also be the smartest. How will you have the strength to stand up for yourself and to say no when you need to say no, and yes when you need to say yes? What are your plans for the future?

Guns

W'at's good wit' da Beat? This is Iggus, comin' straight outta Unit 3. Yeah, but this topic caught ya boy attention, fa real.

I feel everybody who carry guns have a logic reason, 'cause either they got shot at, homies or families killed. So me, personally, I think it's good to have protection, 'cause I'ma stay protected 'til that day it's time for me to go.

And when I do, then it must be time for me, and everybody got a due date, so I'ma live my life like it's no tonight. I might go tonight, so mama pray, don't cry, 'cause ya prayers maybe work, 'cause, mama, they gon' try. Stay up, don't crap out.

-Iggus

From The Beat: Yes, it's good to have protection, but are you sure that guns offer protection? We have read many reports that show that people who carry guns put themselves in greater danger of injury and death than those who don't (maybe because when you're packing, you think you can do about anything, so you put yourself in situations that you wouldn't if you weren't strapped.) As for it being your time, we don't buy that one at all. Do you think so many young African-American and Latino males are dying by the gun on our city streets because it was their "due date?" Who made them due to die on that date? God? If so, he must not like young men of color... Don't you think we contribute to our own physical safety or danger by the choices we make?

The Love That Never Dies

There's this love in my life, not just any love. She gave me life. She showed me love and never left my side till this day. And under these circumstances, she still stands tall and strong. This love of mine is my mother who I love with all my heart and soul.

-Jaziel

From The Beat: This woman deserves all the love that you can give her. We believe you love her very much, but now it's time to show her that love, and not just tell her. By showing her, we mean it's time to find a way to live so that you can stay with her, and be the support she now needs, as she has been your support. What are you prepared to sacrifice for her?

Regrets

Regrets, everyone has regrets
Parents pay intuitions like gambling bets
All I do in return is to get locked up
Now I woke up, I know what's up
Serious, when I get out
I'm going to get a job without a doubt
Thank you for paying for everything

-Chinatown KangaRoo

From The Beat: It's a sign of maturity that you are acknowledge — and thanking — those to whom you some debts for their love and support. We're glad that you are now awake and able to see where a decent future lies. Don't disappoint yourself.

Black And Smart And Talented

Guns and drugs
Is always the reason I lose my thugs
Nights go by
And all the homies on my block cry
Why do governor not see me being more than just black
I have a future, I got talent
I'm way past smart
But they only see me as a 'hood star
I see myself as glamorous
Even though I don't I don't make the right choice
Does that make me dumb?

-NijM

From The Beat: We don't know why the governor and most other politicians treat you like a class of people ("black," "thug," "ghetto") instead of like the individual you are, but that's the way things are. So, since we can't change those external perceptions, the only thing that really matters is how you see yourself. We always say that the greatest revenge to the haters at the top is to succeed, to move beyond the life they've labeled you, and to prove to yourself just how much you can accomplish.

Guns

What's really good wit' Da Beat? Guns is easy to get as buying candy from the store, literally. There is some stores that will sell guns. If I needed one, I can go to the big homies on the block and get one. If you got a good $150 and up, you can get any gun, if you got the right connections.

I seen my first gun at four. Pops had a shotty. He always kept it in the house. I always wanted my own, after moms got killed by one.

-Kb

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you lost your mom to gunfire. But how does that make you want to get one for yourself? You must have learned by now that guns kill, and killing leads to the loss of mothers, fathers, brothers and sisters. What good have you seen guns do for your community?

You Think You Know Me?

Who am I ?
Can you trust me?
You think I will lie to you?
You think I will back stab you?
Will I be a loyal friend?
Will I respect you?
Do you know what kind of person I am?
So.... You think you know me?

-Lil' Friscosco

From the Beat: No, we don't think we know you unless you tell us who you are. We don't know if you're kind or mean, honest or not, dedicated to a better life or to the life that led you here. So, what's keeping you from telling us who you are?

No One I Know Made It Out

I never seen an OG or a homie make it out of the 'hood. Nobody that I know made it out the 'hood. Why? 'Cause they been trying to make short cuts in life, trying to be rich in two weeks, or something like that. Trust me. I see it every day.

People in the 'hood think they can make it out the 'hood by selling and by hitting licks. If you are reading this and you still think that can make it out, trust me, it will never happen.

-Young Val

From The Beat: It's tragic that you know of no one who has escaped the confining 'hood experience, for whatever reason. But with the knowledge you have, why not become the first person you know to do it? What do you need to get out of this trap, and to be a successful person? We don't think you have to be rich or famous to be successful, either. What is your definition of making it out?

You'll Be In For Life

If you think it's cool to have a piece or b-b gun (it's not). Say you have a piece and you just strollin' down tha street and you see a dude you don't like, then you buck at him and kill him. But a few weeks before at school, you and him were playing b-ball and all cool, but then he starts messin' with your crew, so you don't like him. Then you get arrested that same day for somethin' else, and you get charged for murder. Then you in for life.

-USO

From The Beat: Certainly, the legal consequences for taking a life are as heavy as they can be, which is a very good reason not to carry a gun. But there are other good reasons, too. Let's say your scenario happened... not only is one person going to end up dead and another in prison forever, but two mothers will end up grieving, two families will end up being torn apart, and nothing will be done to make the community any safer.

Guns

Guns are bad for the community, but you can't do none about it because there always going to be guns. I know I got a couple of friends that had died and the people who got me through it was my sister and cousins. They took me out places to get my mind of it.

-Michael

From The Beat: We're so sorry that you have already had friends who have lost their lives to guns. You're lucky to have a sister and cousins who care enough about you to try to help you through those sad times. We hope you learned that guns don't make you safe, but only put your life in danger.

In The Game

I think people get in the game because they see it in their environment every day, or because they feel like they have something to prove. But they also don't think about the consequences.

One out of ten people manage to make it out the game. Being in the game is about money, power, and respect, so they say most of the time there is no way to get out unless you end up in jail or dead! It don't matter if you rep a gang or a set. In the streets you see hustlers, pimps, 'ho'es, tricks, and dope fiends.

But you got to be smarter than that. Sit back and peep the scene — there's hella blocks and 'hoods, but either way, it's all the same to me.

-Lil' Bipp

From The Beat: Where do you get your statistics, Lil' Bipp? "9 out of 10" young girls out there are whores (according to you), and only "one out of ten" make it out of the game... Did you invent these numbers? The truth is, we don't care about how many young people do what. We only care about the one young person who is writing this piece... you! We wish you had told us more about you, and your relationship with the street you describe. We know too many people (more than 1 in 10) who were in the game but are no longer, for many reasons — they became parents, they decided school was the important key to their futures, they chose to work legit jobs, or they just got tired and grew up. What about you?

Labeling Girls

Let the truth be told!
9 out of 10 young girls is out there on the 'ho'e stroll
Sellin' they bodies, thinking they hella grown.
I think females get labeled in different categories
Because of the way they carry themselves
Or the way present themselves.

-Lil' Bipp

From The Beat: We like how you've started this piece, but it doesn't go far enough. Do you think girls get labeled differently from boys for doing the same kind of things? Why do you think so many are out there selling themselves? What do you think it does to a girl to sell her body? Are there boys who also practice this very ancient profession? What happens to them?

Guns

Gun are something that help people relieve stress. But it also hurt people. Guns pack a lot of power that make people think they can make people afraid of them and some people cant fight. That why they use guns. I'm stay safe and solid

-Too Militant

From The Beat: Do you really think that guns relieve stress? They may make people think they are untouchable (and therefore take chances they wouldn't otherwise take), but when a mother loses her baby to gunplay (whatever age her baby is), do you think her stress is relieved? Do you think carrying a gun makes you safe? Statistics say they don't.

Gun Laws

Do we need to change the law about guns? I don't think so. I think that the ninja that shot and killed all them people was tripping, ya heard me. Especially over a female.

The people that carry weapons for protection, that's a whole story. People out here shooting each other for mostly getting in the way of the money and turf stuff, ya dig. They aren't really tripping about no female 'cause if they really about they shhh, they know it's mob money over females, ya heard me.

I consider da majority of the females running around in love nowadays to be honest. I probably only met one female I could care for out of them all, so I really do not worry about females 'cause they all foul. As quick as it is to leave one, it's da same to pick them up. That's how it is.

-Jr F Rhyda

From The Beat: So, you think females are more "foul" than males? That's not our experience. We find that there are fine people and foul people in every group — men and women, adults and juveniles, counselors and detainees, gays and straits, black, brown, yellow and white. Tell us, what makes that one female you say you could care for so special?

Afraid To Go One On One

What it do Beat? Me, nothing. Back in here thuggin' it. Man, it's real hectic out there. Nowadays, ninjas getting guns for nothing. Some people can't fight, so they quick to snatch a gun. Man they got it to where young ninjas eleven and up can get dem now.

People carry guns because it's beef. I mean it's real hectic. Man, ninjas is scared to go ones because they know they can't see a ninja, so they go grab they canon. But I'm 'bout to get up out. Holla at ya boy.

-GullyBub

From The Beat: We hate to read those three little words: "Back in here..." Do you think the attraction to guns diminishes over time? In other words, as you mature into adulthood, do guns lose some of their appeal? Why would that be? And why, after experiencing the hall, would you allow yourself to be caught up again to answer to a bunch of strangers telling you what to do? What lessons did you fail to learn? What changes is the system still waiting for you to make? What will it take for you to get out and stay out?

Losses In My Life

Losses in my life hurt me the most because my mom passed away when I was four years old. People in my family told me that I will miss her at times, but I will to move on. They tell me I can't use her as an excuse if I get in trouble. I know I can't, but I just can't let go of my past That was my mother, my light, my best friend, my everything. So how can I let go of that past?

I will always remember her, even though I was young. I will always think of her. I love her, and when I get out, I do good and do what she would want me to do, and make my mother proud of her little big girl.

Time goes by... five years, six years, and just made ten years. Yes, I still look at the past, but now that I'm into my teen years, I have to go on and really make her proud, and show her that I can be something in life and stay out of trouble.

That is the losses in my life.

-Queen Puff

From The Beat: It is always hard to lose our mothers, at any age, and we can understand how this event helped to shape your life. However, now that you are a young adult, you have to take control of your own decisions and the path you walk from here on. We know you can make your mother proud of who you are, but first you have to be proud of who you are by doing things the right way. Are you up to it?

To Grieve

My grandma help me go through life. When I lost my uncle, she told me to be better in life because that's what my uncle would want. To succeed in life and be the best at everything and make my mom proud.

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: Your grandma was a very wise woman. We hope you follow her advice and do what you need to do to make your mom proud of you. What do you have to change to make that happen?

Not Hot On Guns

Guns... Well, I don't think it's so much the guns; it's who's behind the pistol. We need guns for protection, but we need to keep them away from those emotionally unstable. Maybe a health examination before each gun purchase. Like the old saying, "Guns don't kill people; people kill people." You can't give a gun life, it's the shooter.

-Jungle

From The Beat: Of course you're right, the gun is nothing more than a tool for good or for ill, depending on who is pulling the trigger. But at the same time, we can't always know who is stable and who is unstable — until after they lose it and start shooting people! Plus, even though it sounds like guns should offer protection, the numbers don't add up. Most people who die on our streets were strapped for protection; it didn't help them, and in fact might have made them act recklessly or foolishly because they thought they couldn't be touched. Finally, young people (and many adults, too) have real trouble controlling their anger, and if they lose their temper with only their fists in their pockets, they can't really kill somebody. But if they have a gun and they lose their temper...

The Role Guns Play

The role guns play in my life... It's so much hating in this world or in the community I live in, that people do not fight no more. So it's like gun play and you really can't trust nobody. Because after you fight somebody they responding on going to get a gun.

It's like people have guns to protect themselves because nowadays people grabbing guns off top, no question about it, and really it's gone be whatever it turns out to be, ya dig.

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: You really could do a lot more with this piece, JP. We understand what you mean when you describe the gun situation as off the hook, but we wish you would tell us how you fit into this picture. Are you the kind who grabs a gun to settle your problems, or have you discovered a better, more responsible way to deal with life?

Them Guns

TBW: Mr. V. you want to be interviewed today. We can interview you about almost anything you'd like to talk about. So, what's on your mind?
V: I want to write about what guns do to my community.
TBW: Terrific! Do the people in your community carry and use a lot of guns?
V: Yes, we do!
TBW: Can you describe for us what has happened to your community because so many people are carrying and using those guns?
V: It's guns bringing our community down.
TBW: How?
V: Like deaths, loss of lives.
TBW: Who has those guns? Adults? Teenagers? Kids?
V: Everybody in our community has guns. Certain negative individuals.
TBW: Why?
V: For protection from revenge, from loss of lives in our community, and some carry 'em because they was like, if they see others with them, they get immune to it. They wanna follow in others' footsteps, not knowing that's what's causin' our community to fall downhill.
TBW: When they see their family, their friends, their neighbors, die and get horribly wounded because they've been shot, why doesn't that stop them from carrying a gun?
V: Because of revenge. I feel like that sometimes, too, but I know what it's causing and what the outcome can be—if we can't change the bad negativity in our community.
TBW: Have you ever felt like using a gun because you're angry, because someone's been killed in your community? For revenge?
V: Yes.
TBW: Can you describe what went down that hurt you so much you'd consider using a gun to avenge someone's death?
V: Like my best friend.
TBW: Was your best friend shot?
V: When Ne Ne got shot, I felt like killin' someone.
TBW: What did you do about it?
V: I was up here (at the Ranch, part of the San Francisco juvy system in La Honda, CA.)
TBW: So you couldn't do anything about it?
V: Right.
TBW: When you get out of here (the Ranch,) is Ne Ne's death going to be a problem?
V: It's gonna be like beefin' problems. I feel like, if you take one of mine, I'm gonna take one of yours. Sometimes I get really sad because I feel like everyone around me is dying. I might be next.
TBW: You know, when Ne Ne was here, his great homie was killed and there was nothing he could do about it because he was locked up, but he thought about it for months down at the Ranch. We may never know what happened when he was home again, but now he's dead. And now you keep thinking about revenging his death.
V: Yeah.
TBW: So then, the cycle of violence just goes on and on?
V: Yeah.
TBW: Is there anything you can do, or that anyone in your opinion can do, to stop the violence in your neighborhood?
V: You can't stop violence. I can't stop violence, but we all could if we all came together.
TBW: What would it take for all of you to come together?
V: Throw the guns away. No, keep the guns but stop the unnecessary killings.
TBW: What's the difference between the necessary and unnecessary killings?
V: Unnecessary means if that bro walkin' by mindin' his own business, but if I'm tryna protect myself and somebody comes at me, tryna harm me, I protect myself to the best ability I have, like self-defense.

-V

From The Beat: Thank you for a beautiful, painful interview. We hope people who read it feel what you've said and can get an understanding what it must be like to be surrounded by the danger and death people with their guns are creating for your neighborhood. And we hope that when you're home again, you find the strength to take out your hurt and anger some other way than getting revenge against whoever killed your best friend. You have our hearts.

My First Gun

My first time with a gun, I was at home and my sister's boyfriend JJ game over a with an AP 9. My sister was playing with it after JJ took the clip out. Then my sister asked me if I wanted to see it, and I said yes.

That was my first time seeing and holding a gun. After that I wanted my own just because I wanted to be able to say to myself I got something to make 'em bang back. I went everywhere with my gun not looking for no one to shoot. Then one day a kid got killed by the police for having a toy gun. So I stopped keeping my BB gun with me. I have never picked up a real gun, and I don't plan to.

-Marque

From The Beat: How did you get that first gun? Did you have to buy it, or did someone give it to you? When you were carrying it, did it feel like a toy, or did it make you feel powerful? When you showed it to your friends, how did it make you feel? From your conclusion, we can tell that the child you were when that gun was so appealing to you has been replaced by a responsible young man. Now it's time to apply that grown-up sensibility to finding a way to stay out of places like this!

Stuck

Stuck
Wondering what to do
Sitting in this facility
Alone without you

Stuck
Yo' body on my mind
You a beautiful person
Yo' love is one of a kind

Stuck
Sexual images I see
Tired of spendin' nights
With Pamela and me

Stuck
Surrounded by men
Make love to you all night
Then hold your hand

Stuck
Taking it day by day
Dreaming of a time
I could just go away

Stuck
Hella dudes in my face
Lost in the world
Without having you in my space
Baby, I'm stuck

-Young Ant

From The Beat: Very nice poem.. You deliver a very romantic and sensuous poem. Do you think the real problem is that you're incarcerated right now and that as soon as you're home again, you'll become unstuck? We hope so.

To Grieve

For the grief of my little girl
I don't speak of my child
But I speak of myself
Being lost in a crowd
So I'm lost in life, facing fear
But I paid the price to get here
Once a girl... 'til the days walked right past
Killed the child so fast
So the childhood didn't last
I didn't notice, but while I stood tall
I fell from my innocence
And while it all faded slowly
Then came the boastful belligerence
So smart and smart mouth, real rude and impolite
Building a vocab, real strong, but only used words for provoking fights
Gave in to street game, but I ran it just right
Only got played if you played yourself
An' put your health up on a shelf

-Purple Hayze

From The Beat: You say that you ran your street game "just right," but since you're in a program writing, we have to wonder if this isn't a little reminder of that "boastful belligerence" you wrote about. Did you play yourself?

Hey, Beat!

Well, I don't really want to specifically speak of a topic today, but talking about the Virginia shooting. To me, I think guns are hecka dumb. I understand it for safety on a certain level, but doesn't that trigger someone else to use it for self-defense? This shhh is getting worse, even though there are gun control laws, that doesn't stop this stuff from happening all the time.

On the other hand, today is 420 and I'm in rehab. I guess that's a good thing, because I'm not smokin', but it still really sucks. That's all I've got today. Thanks.

-Angel Kisses

From The Beat: Well, you don't sound too sure of your commitment to sobriety, but your words about guns are wise and true. We very much like your choice of words that holding a gun for self-defense "triggers" someone else to pick up a gun. We think the biggest trouble with guns, especially in the hands of boys, is that they are pulled by the trigger, rather than the other way around.

Doing My Program

What's uppers Beat? Well, I wanted to write again and put it down for my town San Jo. Well, I'm doing good. Still doing my program. Doing what I have to do to help myself.

To the haters still out there doing the same stuff, get your butts up and do something with your life. Get a job, go back to school. Life ain't no joke. You only live once, so make something of yourselves. Stop getting locked up. Your family needs you.

I have been through all of that — getting locked up, doing drugs, involved with bad relationships, gang fights, getting jumped by your rivals, using a gun, getting a gun pulled out on you, losing your homies, drinking forties at the park, kicking back.

Fun's over now, so live life right. Get off probation, take care of your family, make money the right way. Get your education, go to college, be successful. Show them haters you're somebody. Prove to the law you can do it.

Well, I am out. Much love to the people keeping it together.

-Nessa

From The Beat: That's very good and solid advice that you're giving. We think it's even more encouraging coming from someone who's been there and is moving on! You're a living testament to the advice you're giving. Continue to do what you're doing and don't give up before all your hard work pays off!

One Day I'll Be Free . . .

One day I'll be free from all programs and all systems
One day I'll be free to walk to the corner store all by myself
One day I'll be free to do whatever I want to do
One day I'll be free outside
One day I'll be free from the world
One day I'll be free just to be free

-Marie

From The Beat: Well, nobody is free "to do whatever" he or she wants (freedom has limits, too), but we know what you mean. And you're right; one day you will be free.

Updated

What up? It's your girl, Green Eyes. Well, to give you a update, I'm doing good. I'm still in Walden House, but this place is shutting down, so I'm going to go to another program in San Jose and do three to six months there, and I'm outys, but I'm cool. Still taking care of business. Laters.

-Nessa

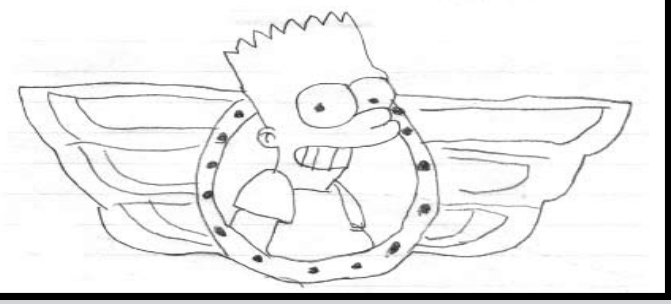
From The Beat: Thanks for the update, Nessa. We wondered what some of the Walden House folks would be doing now that the program is ending. Good luck in San Jose. Write us and let us know what it's like.

Five Years Ago, Five Years From Now

Five years ago I was being molested by my step-grandfather.
Five years ago I was living with foster parents after foster parents. Group homes after group homes.
Five years ago I was getting jumped and getting high.
Five years from now, I will be with my beautiful daughter Patricia. Five years from now, I will be at home with a good family —
My baby girl, my fiancé, maybe more kids too.

-Marie

From The Beat: From where you've been to where you see yourself going says a lot about you. It's amazing how we can let our past hold us back, or inspire us to move past obstacles in our way. What are the steps you are taking to make sure you get to live the life you see in your future? What will it take to continue down that path? How will you deal with obstacles and temptations when they show up? It's good to have back up plans, just in case, and a support group you can go to for support when needed. We see you accomplishing everything you want because you believe in yourself. Don't ever stop, especially when times get hard. Thank you for sharing!



Dear Mr. Hater

You just mad cause I've moved on. Mad because I'm gone doing what I need to do, to get my crap together. Spendin' more time with the people that I love and that love me back. Instead of you, who hates me because I'm doing the right thing. So what's the problem? I'm not selling, not poppin', not smokin'? You mad? You just hating cause I'm doing better without you. Bye! It's going to stay this way.

-Stephanie

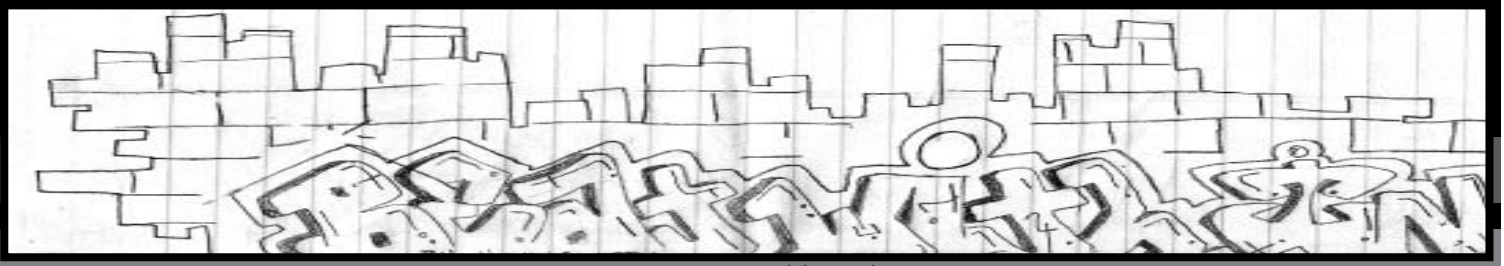
From The Beat: You've said what you've needed to say, and now you should just keep moving forward. There will always be someone there hating,, but don't give them too much of your time — even the time it takes to think about them. That may take away from what is truly important, working on yourself. Keep building on what you've worked hard to accomplish. As you build a foundation to stand on, each day will get easier than the day before, until you are far from those you don't need to be around.

Why?

Why is my life the way it is?
Why do I always have to be the "troubled kid"?
Why do I have to be addicted to drugs?
Why couldn't I just be given hugs?
Why am I always depressed?
Why is my life such a mess?
Why can't I be with my family?
Why can't my life be the way it used to be?
Why I am not able to say comforting words?
Why can't I go outside and look at the birds?
Why can't I be pretty like other girls?
Why is my life lost in a bundle of curls?
Why do I always isolate myself from others?
Why can't I go see my mother?
Why am I so miserable?
Why does it seem my life is so irreparable?
Why do I feel I make everything go down hill?
Why do I sometimes want to kill?
Why do I have no will power of my own?
Why do I love to be alone?
Why do I make everyone mad?
Why does everything they say make me sad?
Why am I always so frustrated?
Why is my body self mutilated?
Why are the decisions I make impulsive?
Why did I choose this life to live?
Why do I have such low self-esteem?
Why can't my face smile and beam?
Why do I feel so misunderstood?
Why do I feel I always have to wear my hood?
Why am I so jealous?
Why do I have to cuss?
Why am I at this damn rehab?
Why am I addicted to crystal meth?
Why do I wish today was my last breath?
Why do I sit in self-pity?
Why do I feel so small and alone in a big city?
Why am I not good at anything?
Why am I constantly waiting for someone to take me under their wing?
Why do I seem to everyone as an outcast?
Why is my life going by so fast?
Why do I feel so empty?
Why do I feel nobody loves me?
Why do I try so hard when nothing ever gets done?
Why can't someone just give me a shotgun?
Why is it hard for me to pay attention?
Why can't I get a job?
Why do I hurt the ones I love like my mom?
Why is it hard for me to trust?
Why do I only find love in lust?
Why did my best friends mom die of breast cancer?
Why do all my questions go unanswered?

-Sik-N-Twiztid

From The Beat: Let's start out with one answer to one of your questions. The reason you are "at this damn rehab" is so that you can begin to answer some of these questions for yourself. Those answers will not come to you on your own; you need help finding the answers. That's why you're here. We believe that many of thing bad things you're feeling come directly from your drug use (though you'll have to dig deeper to understand why you needed those drugs to begin with). That means we also believe if you get control over that, you will find you have gained control over many other areas of your life that you thought you had no control over. If you concentrate on those questions which you have some control over, you'll see your list get smaller. As you take the time to seriously think about the answer for one, it actually prepares you to better answer the next. We hope you keep this list of questions so that you will see how many of them get answered along the way of the self-discovering journey you are now on. In time, many of your questions will answer themselves.



SANTA CRUZ

In The Way Of My Success

The people I think are keeping me from success are the governor, judges, DAs, and cops. They're the real convicts, thieves and murderers, because they steal from the poor. They take our liberty and freedom. They act as if they know me but they don't know anything about me. They keep me in this cage like a dog in the back of a cop car instead of letting me be in school, like the normal person I am.

-Juan

From The Beat: Are you saying there are no decent judges, police officers, or DAs? All of us exaggerate to make a point, but we think you've stretched the paint too thin. You have identified a major problem – poverty. But we think your analysis of what causes poverty is suspect. Read some history. Try reading Howard Zinn's "A People's History Of The United States". It's a take on our society you won't find in the usual textbooks.

Dreams, Destiny

Every time I have a dream, it may be about my destiny. It takes me back to the days when I was on the streets. But I never seem to finish the dream and always wish I hadn't woken up. It's like trying to get back into a shell – trying to return to a dream. Before I go to sleep, I say a prayer that the things I dream of won't be in my future, but maybe it was meant to be. But guess what … if it happens, I'm ready for it.

-G

From The Beat: Dreams are made up of the events of your days, your fears, your wishes, the pieces of your life. Dreams are not fortune tellers. Don't worry about your dreams. Be concerned with what you do in your waking life. Do good there and there's a good chance your dreams will be good, too.

They keep me in this cage like a dog in the back of a cop car instead of letting me be in school, like the normal person I am.

Poem

One day there were ugly stains on my clothes.
That night I had a dream of a train full of cotton.

-Jose

From The Beat: So, we know what kind of material you like. And we like your poem. It's short, unexpected, and slightly mysterious.

From Selfish Child To Remorseful Adult

Several years of suffering and sacrifice. I regret not spending time with my dad. A few years before I was told my father's days were limited. I took it with anger and did not believe. I guess I was too young and immature, I put the block, the females, my potnas before spending time with family.

I realized that when he passed I had made too many promises to him that I knew I could not keep. When I seen him take his last breath, I seen all the pain in his face and realized it was too late.

I regret being selfish keeping my time for pleasure instead of bonding with family, my dad especially. I noticed I have never really told my dad that I have really cared and loved him. There were many things that I regret, but this is the most I regret. That is why I tatted up my arm with a crucifix and his death anniversary to remember the pain and suffering he went through.

RIP Dad!

-Yb

From The Beat: Have you ever heard of the saying, "Late is better than never?" It is not too late to change your ways and finish the unfulfilled promises you made to your dad. He will be most happy and in peace to know that his death, as painful as it was, can bring his daughter back from the edge of an unhappy future. There is still time to spend with the rest of your family, so do not wait until one of them leaves you again to change the way you're living so that you can spend time with them.

Holy Man

Holy Man, open up your eyes
So I can see
Christ won't let me see
So open wide and let the demon free
Holy man, open up your mouth
So I can speak
Christ won't let me speak
So open wide and let the evil free
Holy Man, open up your ears
So I can hear
Christ won't let me hear
So open wide and let me hear your fear
Holy Man, open up your heart
So I can live
Christ won't let me be
So open wide so the devil can be
Holy man, get on your knees
Now you shall see
Christ can not stop
You let the devil free
So get on your knees
Start praying to me

-Ash Night

From The Beat: Your poems can be frightening, as well as very cryptic and difficult to comprehend. We're not sure if this is a prayer to Christ or to the devil, or not really a prayer at all. Plus, when it ends, we're not sure if you're telling your readers to pray to you because you are the devil or Christ or...? What? Who is the "Holy Man" of the title?

Just Let Me Be

I can not deal
This pain is just too real
I don't want to feel
I don't want to be
I just want to leave
Please just let me be
I can't get away
I can not hide
Don't want to see
Just let me be
Screaming for an end
Just want it to stop
Stop
Leave me alone
I can't stand your screaming at me
Shut up
Go away
Just shut up
Go away
Take my pain
Take my sin away
Just let me be
Cut
Scratch
Pain
Bleed
Just let me be
Never been free
Let me be
Before
Be after
Because
I don't know
Just let me be

-Ash Night

From The Beat: It seems to us that your biggest tormentor is yourself. Can you just let yourself be? If not, then would you consider talking seriously about the demons that haunt you with somebody who is professionally trained to hear the torments of the mind? The kind of screaming you describe inside your head can only work to keep you from going forward with your life, and so it's truly important that you take this seriously and not try to cope with all of it on your own. We don't know what's at the root of your desperate cries, but we do know they won't go away on their own... and that, until they do go away, you will be their prisoner.

Coming Back All These Times

When I regret of doing something I regret coming back to jail for the 4th time. I know my mom is tired of me coming back all these times, and I don't want to come back here again. When I get out this time, I'm going to do 32 days on EMP, and do what I got to do to stay out. And make my mom happy and go to school.

-Lil' Dudd

From The Beat: It's not just your mom that is tired of you're being locked up, we hope. It's you, too. Going to school is not the only thing you need to do to make your mom happy, although that is very important. You also have to stay out of trouble and stay out of jail. We know this: If you do what you have to do to make your mother proud, you will also make yourself proud.

Bumper-Car Drive By

Ferris wheels and clowns
Cotton candy you'll hear the sound
It must be the bumper-car drive by
In the middle of the fair
In the middle of the night
Bumper-car drive by
Clowns laughing
Little kids screaming
Bumper-car drive by
Bumping, laughing
Slashing, shooting
It must be the bumper-car drive by
You drop your candy apple
You try to hit the dirt
But you're caught in middle of two wars
Clowns and jokers trying to set a score
Bumper-car drive by
In the middle of the fair
In the middle of the night
Bumper-car drive by

-Ash Night

From The Beat: You have one weird and twisted imagination, Ash... This sounds like a sequel to one of the "Chucky" movies. After reading this, we'll never feel the same way again about bumper cars...

Regrets

I regret a lot of things in my life
From arguing with my mom to getting in fights
I was told to start getting it right
'Cause if I didn't, my future consists of getting three strikes.

Sometimes I just don't think before I do things
I just did it, never gave myself a choice between two things
I think about it later on, and it's confusing
I was mad, but other people see it as funny or amusing.

I do good things, but the stupid things I can't forget
And I know why, it's 'cause I carry it with me as regret.

-Pyramid

From The Beat: We know that when you're here, you are able to think before you act. (You may want to cuss out staff or go off on someone in your unit, but you think of the consequences, and prevent yourself from acting.) So, if you can do it here, there's no doubt that you can also do it on the outs. Of course, just because you CAN do it, does not mean that you WILL do it. But we hope that you can use some of the strategies for self-control that you've had to develop while you're under the control of strangers...

Dropping Out

I remember when I was in the streets with the homies. We would be cruising in the enemy turf, looking for enemies. And when we would see them, we all would get off the car and have a gang fight. And when the fight would be over, we would run back inside the car, and either one of them or one of us would be stabled with blood all over their shirts.

That is one thing I regret, hurting our own people, killing our own people, more mother's cries. I'm just happy that I changed my life around just in time because I was already living in the fast lane, and not caring about nobody. So, to all you youngsters and gang members out there, it is not too late to change your life around. If I can do it, you can do it.

-Carlos

From The Beat: What did it take for you to walk away from this destructive lifestyle? How did you come to view those former "enemies" as your "own people?" What are your plans now that you see the value of your own life as an individual? What are you going to do when you get out of here so that you never spend another day in jail?

Chased

When I get chased, I run from the police. They can't never catch me at all. And when I was little I ran from my mother when she would always try to whoop me with a belt. I would run all around the house and she would chase me. And when I would get in trouble at school my dad would try to whoop me too. but he would never catch me. Sometime he would. And when I ran away from home, the police could never catch me or chase me.

-Omar

From The Beat: We love how a prisoner like you can write, "They can't never catch me at all..." If that's true, how did you end up behind bars this time? Were you chased by the police and then caught? If you really believe you can't get caught — even when you're already locked up — your mind is not thinking clearly. Take a good look around you and recognize that you not only can get caught, but that every time you mess up like this, you will get caught. It's time to create a new reality.

Not Listening

The thing that I regret doing is coming back in here, not spending time with my lil' nephew. My twin brother is going to be a dad in August and my brother's baby mama is upset with us because we keep getting into trouble. But the thing is me not listening to my parents.

-Drifter

From The Beat: Your brother is going to be a father soon, and there are more responsibilities for him now. This should be a signal to you both to change the lifestyle you both live. As a brother, you should be there for him when he becomes a father to help him out and to help guide your new nephew or niece. In fact, you should be home guiding the nephew you already left behind. So we hope that this will be the last time your brother and you will "keep getting into trouble."

God's Saying!

There's a saying that God
Never gives us more burdens
Than we can bear…
And if that's true,
Then God must think
You're very, very strong
Because this surely hasn't been
An easy time for you.
I wish there was a way
I could shelter you
From pain and unhappiness,
Because if there was, I would,
But all I can really do
Is be here for you
And keep you in my prayers
You are a child of God.
He made you. He loves you.
And he will not forsake you…
That I know for sure.

-Chris

From The Beat: We love the message in this piece, though we don't know who you are writing to in this positive and supportive poem. You know, we're all children of God, and therefore we're all entitled to the respect God's creations command.

Chased

I have experienced chasing someone and me being chased. I remember almost every time I would be on the streets and a rival or rival gang would come, my homies and me would chase them. People say that payback is hell, and it is because the same thing would happen to me.

-Shy

From The Beat: Aren't your tired of all this chasing and being chased? Running for your life and not know when it will end? Don't you get tired of always having to look over your shoulders? It makes us tired just to read what some of y'all have to say. Can you imagine a life where you are neither chasing nor being chased?

Regret Not Listening

What I regret doing is not coming home for two weeks for being with my homies drinking and smoking and kickin' it, and not listened to my parents. So I regret for doing this stuff.

I remember when we chased some fools down the street that we were walking, and we saw them kick it in the park and we chased them.

-Lil' M

From The Beat: We combined your two short pieces into one, Lil' Mousy. But both pieces were really too short for us to get much information. Next time, try to focus on just one topic and right a lot more about it. We all have regrets in our lives, so the question is, what are you going to do about those regrets? Are you going to change anything about the way you live so that you don't gather future regrets?

Wish Me Luck!

What's up Beat? I get released on May 17, 2007. I'm really happy, man, because they didn't sent me to CYA.

Now I have another chance to come back out and give one last try. After a while, hopefully they accept me back to a regular high school. I even forgot how it feels like being in a regular high school. Hopefully I could graduate and get a job as a autobody shop or mechanic. So wish me luck.

As for the rest of the people who always are by my side and helped me, thanks, and God bless y'all. I never forget you all until the next time. I'll catch y'all on the rebound you know what I mean jelly bean!

-Pato

From The Beat: We wish you the best and all the luck you will need to stay out of trouble and do what you want to do. Of course, there's much more than luck involved, so it's great that you plan to get back to school and take that path forward (because is the path that leads steadily away from here). But you also need to stay away from what brought you into jail and almost to CYA. Next time if you fail, CYA will be waiting and your future will be that much more difficult to change. Now's your chance. Don't blow it.

Regrets

When I think of the thing I regret makes me sad. I regret when I hurt people for me getting locked up in here. I regret doing the crime that lead me getting in trouble. I regret a lot of things. Also like when I talked something to a person that I loved and cared for in my family.

-Juan

From The Beat: Regrets are something that will always be with us. But if we learn not to repeat the mistakes of the past, we can reduce the number of things we have to regret in the future. So take a good look at the way your life has gone off track, and change what is necessary for you to avoid regrets in the future.

Regret

That one thang I regret doing is getting caught up in the system so fast at a young age. If I just said no… Instead, I wanted to go. Nobody can stop me no more. Now my room is surrounded by cement floor and I'm dazing out my cell door wondering if I can take it anymore.

-G Money

From The Beat: Be strong and hold your head up. All this will be over soon, but it's up to you to make sure it is not going to happen

Back Again

Serving two months, thinking I was not coming back, thinking I was a new person. Think again…

Two and a half weeks that I've been released, I'm in school and a fight breaks out. And snitches start to talk. Somehow my name got in the mix and I had no idea why it went down. Soon enough, my PO comes to discuss the problem with me. My PO was not buying the truth, and even though the day was nice and sunny, that's when the light turned to darkness.

My PO thought I was under the influence of marijuana. Trying to convince him to do a urination test, he insisted to search me first. A confident "go ahead" I said, forgetting I had a gruesome knife in my back pocket. Shocked by the discovery, he immediately slaps on the handcuffs. A big sigh and with a sad face was my response.

Now I back again doing time, making sadness in my family. I regret the stupid things I do, but I also have to learn from them. Back again to being bossed around and being locked up in a room all by myself. It makes mental pain in the heart. Facing camp I wish for one last chance, changing my friends, praying to God my wish comes true. The stress is still like a crick in my neck. It won't stop 'till I go to court and get my release date. But till then I back again.

-Lil' D

From The Beat: We hope you won't be back for long. But can we ask you a difficult question? If you thought you were "a new person," what were you doing with that knife in your pocket?

Soon Out

What I regret is not being there with my lady. She's five months pregnant. I wish I could be there with her taking care of her but hopefully I'll be out next month to be there when my son is born.

-Calavera

From The Beat: You say you wish you were out there with your pregnant lady, but you WERE out there with her, and you decided that something else was more important. You gave the system the power to take from her and your baby, so you are the one who has to acknowledge that being there for them is your number one priority. You're gong to have to sacrifice something for the good of their (and your) future. Are you ready for that? You do not want your son to grow up not knowing you. or to be a father only there during those sporadic times when you're not locked up…

That Car

I was chased when me and some homies came up on a car and we were driving around. The guy we stole the car, he find us drive, and he crash the car. We got out and run we got away. And we were breaking windows and we got away.

-Alejandro

From The Beat: How do you feel about what you did and what happened? Yes, you got away, but think about what you did. Do you think it's all right to take something that someone worked had to earn the money to buy, while you act like a small child and just take it because it looks shiny and nice and you want it? We hope you and your boys grow up soon, because not what you did was not only wrong, but we can assure you there are prison cells waiting for y'all if you don't change your act.

Losing A Friend

I regret so many things on the outs. but there is only one thing I would never forget. I regret when I told my cousin to stay home so I can go to the store. But when I came back, one of my friends said that he got shot and died. I was so mad that day I would just kill anyone, but I was thinking it was my fault. I should just take him with me and that the only thing I will never forget.

RIP.

-Check

From The Beat: It's not your fault and you should not be blaming yourself. We know it's hard, but the more you blame yourself for what happened, the more it's going to hold you down in the future. And we're glad that you were not able to act on your impulse to "kill anyone," because that would have been your fault, and you would be facing consequences well into your old age.

Chasing My Dreams

I'm not being chased, but I am doing the chasing. I'm not chasing a person or an object, but instead I'm chasing my dream. The dream that I'm chasing is to be successful with a career, family, house, and to one day retire. It may not be the popular money and fame dream like most people, but I want a realistic and simple life. It may not be much, but it is enough for me.

-James

From The Beat: This is by far the best piece we have gotten about chasing. Thanking you James for taking this topic to a whole new level. We always know we can count on you! And we also know that you can count on yourself to make sure your dream comes true.

Mother Of An Addict

A curse handed down to bear the labor...
Then we only take one day to show our love,
And usually only on paper...
A card...Are you kidding me...
It's a start, but you're killing me!
To he who is sinless, cast the first stone...
There will be no throwing, the face in the mirror,
Is my own!
Yeah, I'm grown,
But I'm still a kid...
I love my mommy for all she's done
And I'm sorry for all I did!
I've broken trust, stone and cussed,
Just a down-right dirt bag!
You gave me life, I make you cry,
And you don't deserve that!
I know it's hard being the mother of an addict...
When you hold me in your arms,
you see more than shackles and filthy habits...
I chase the dragon...
You pray for magic...
Asking the Lord every night to save me from an early casket!
Mommy, I know my words and actions may seem like contradictions...
I say I'm through, get out for a week or two,
Then right back to prison... Listen...
I know I got problems and I'll always suffer from addiction...
And you might have accepted my condition...
Thinking I'll never change...
That I'll always be afflicted...
But when you say His name...
Don't you believe in what your wishing for? What are you praying for...
If you don't believe in His saving force?!?
Mom, you no longer have to believe in me...
But believe in He... The One and only...
The Son, the Father, the Holy...
If it's twisted, then pray to the Spirit
For He who takes is he who gives it...
For it's been spoken, only He can fix what's been broken...
The best gift I can give you this year is HOPE!
I love you Mom, you are the bomb...
And that is the realest thing I ever wrote...

ALIBI ***From one of our favorite Beat Without contributing poets comes this Mother's Day tribute and apology. All of us fall short of our mothers' expectations and hopes, and Alibi — who writes us from somewhere deep down in the vast California prison empire — laments all the pain he has caused the woman who gave him life, and to whom he now offers the gift of hope.***

Yeah, I'm grown,
But I'm still a kid . . .
I love my mommy for all she's done
And I'm sorry for all I did!

Horizontal

At times I really wonder if I've turned cold...
But minutes, possibly an hour have passed,
And I realize in some ways... but completely, No!
For I was horizontal, laid up in bed, lazy, depressed...
Sure, I ran my ass off yesterday, but to what? For what?
Repressed?
Emotions, commotion... drama, childhood trauma... maybe not
Running, but hiding... Fighting sand, so I don't have to face them
Those feelings, healing, bouncing off walls, floors and the ceiling
Mentally, but physically laid up in bed... horizontal
More minutes have passed, grains have slipped, pulled by gravity...
People have died... and children have been born...
People have lied, cheated, and mourned!
Minutes ago, possibly an hour, I cried, wept, while horizontal
In a dream? What does it mean? So sad, sad, sad, sad...
My seed, my Hija, my vida, so precious, so beautiful, didn't know me
Didn't, maybe couldn't, wouldn't call me Daddy, or hold me...
Saddened by the fact, she didn't call me Father...
Wept like a child, for my child... bothered...

DANIEL ***This next writer who's writing us from Contra Costa County Juvenile Hall (why don't we do workshops there?), makes a great analogy between him and his room. For though his room currently keeps him bolted in, there are ways in which he kept himself bolted in while on the streets. And not only does he recognize this, but he also wants to change it. Well, though he makes no reference to not being bolted down now, he is actually freeing himself. If you were to ask how, we would answer by publishing this piece. This next piece is the equivalent to him loosening those bolts. He's no longer letting nothing go out and nothing come in. He's sharing a piece of himself and we really enjoy what he's given us. Thank you...***

Don't get me wrong, I got love for them, but how am I going to be with people who hold me back from blooming and showing my full potential?

Similarities Between My Room And Me

I'm sitting incarcerated in Contra Costa Juvenile Hall staring at the light beige walls, the toilet bowl, and sink. I also notice how the door is locked with a steel bolt to show that I'm locked up. It's kinda crazy but this room relates to my life in a way. I was stuck in a room where nothing would go out and nothing would come in (my gang) that's all I knew and all I wanted to know. I didn't care about nothing else. I was full of hate and anger, neglecting the ones who really cared for me.

Now that I sit and realize that life ain't only about my gang, homeboys and homegirls. Don't get me wrong, I got love for them, but how am I going to be with people who hold me back from blooming and showing my full potential? I asked myself this question a little too late, it was when I was staring into a mirror of a six by nine cell wearing someone else's clothes, underwear, and socks with holes.

Now I understand why I was stuck in that room, it was because I was that steel bolt that was keeping me inside not letting nothing go out or come in. I often ask myself, what if I did let something go out or come in where would I be? Who would I be? And what would I be? The only answer to that, who knows, but its too late now I should've been thinking before I locked myself in. (Don't stay locked in and destroy yourself. Make something happen.)

"WILD BILL" BARNES ***Back in issue 12.08 we published a very creative and mind boggling piece about the president, George W. Bush, going to jail. Well, with much anticipation, we awaited the following chapters and now they're finally here. Not only that but these next two chapters (that's right, we said two chapters) are equally, if not more, riveting than the first one. In these chapters, George and Bill go through an intellectual conversation in jail, escape from jail together, and are on the verge of becoming porn stars while on the run. We know, we know, it's kind of hard to believe, but again this is imagination working and most of the time our best writing comes from our imagination. We guarantee that if you read these two chapters you won't be able to wait for chapter four, especially because he ends with them on the verge of starting their porn star experience. How awful an image is that? George W. Bush as a porn star... We'll see what's to come of both Bill and George in this story, but before we do that we'll send this to the Marion Correctional Facility in Marion, North Carolina, where Bill is writing from.***

George Goes To Jail Chapter Two

Putting an arm around the shoulder, I help George up. As the dudes on the yard stared, I guide him back into B-Dorm. Naturally, by now, George had his own cell. Ignoring the rule not to enter another man's cell, I gently led him to his bunk, sitting him down. Standing close to the door, I waited awhile and thankfully, his sobs gradually subsided.

"George it's alright. You like everybody else are on a soul journey. Learning what you need to learn as you go... And, right now, I'd say you're learning compassion".

Through tear-stained red eyes, looked at me beseechingly. "But I was compassionate. Or, at least, I tried to be. That's what I even called myself, remember? A compassionate conservative..."

"Yeah, I know, George, but you just fell way short of the mark, sad to say."

"Well like how?"

"George, you signed death warrants in Texas, remember?"

"But I was just following the people's will..."

"Perhaps so. But, you used the word follow. That's not what leaders are supposed to do. Passing judgment upon those born into less fortunate circumstances. Is not compassion, George. You know Judge not, lest ye be judged. Nor is waging war. Sending some poor mothers sons to kill other mothers sons isn't compassionate either, George, Mothers need their sons, George... They love them."
George just look sad.

"George, considering the things you did, these guys have shown you compassion. A lot of it. I mean, here you are in the 'Lions Den,' no secret services dudes or nothing, and these guys ain't much bothered you, have they?"

"Nope. Not that much."

"And at least some of them probably had a relative, or at least somebody they knew, who took it hard in Iraq..."

"Maybe I'm learning... maybe I'm learning..." George said, choking up a little.

"George, you ever hear of the dude they called the monster of the Andes."
George shook his head no.

"This guy was a serial killer, George. Confessed to killing over 300 women in Columbia, Peru and Ecuador. Can you guess what they did to him, George?"

"Uh, hung him up by his gonads and forced him to listen to Bjork albums for all eternity...?"
I laughed, grateful George had, at least, recovered from his crying spell enough to take a stab at humor.

"Nah, George. Maybe that woulda been appropriate, but what they actually did was let him go after 18 years. For good behavior."

"I don't believe it."

"It's probably hard for anyone inflected with the America 'tough on crime mindset' to believe it, George, but it's true."

"18 years, huh?" George asked, shaking his head incredulously.

"Yes, George, and I can tell you why, too. Those countries haven't lost their behavior to America's. America has actually built a few prisons entirely underground. Literally burying men alive..."

"Maybe America just simply has too much money. Where they can afford to indulge all this mindless, self righteous hypocrisy of brutalizing people most especially poor people with endless prison sentences..."

"But remember, George, were all guilty. It's always stuck with me what I heard a wise chaplain say one day. When I stand naked before the Throne, I will not want justice. I'll want mercy. All I'll be able to say is: Have mercy on me Lord, a sinner..."

Perhaps George did experience an "epiphany" of sorts that day. He seemed to, at least gradually, become a more humble, likeable person. And he and I got to be pretty good pals.

Then, in the year of our Lord 20?? The world changed dramatically. I was out on the yard one sunny afternoon, just soaking up the rays, when I learned that the fire from the sun had touched the Earth, at two different locations. George came running over with the speaker-buds to his little radio in his ears. "Bill, we just got hit! Hard! Terrorists have attacked both L.A and New York, with massive casualties..."

Although we were all deeply shocked, it couldn't be said the tragic events were totally unexpected. I'd long figured it was just a matter of time...

As we later learned, two brothers, Mohammed and said Al-Blowaway, whose mother had been "collateral damage" in a couple "suitcase nukes" one in Manhattan, the other in downtown L.A.

America though, somehow, hung together. But the financial damage was huge.

And then a young black preacher, James Thomas King, who'd had eight years stolen from his life. Due to a railroad job wrongful conviction, got out. And, like a previous king, he had a dream...

Seeing, clearly, that the Prison Industrial Complex was nothing more than a big greedy monster that fed on human misery was, in effect, simply "factory farming" human beings he started a crusade. Publishing a pamphlet called "The Day The Prison Industrial Complex Met It's Match." It was like the civil rights era all over again. He aptly pointed out that the prison industrial complex was much akin to a southern plantation relying upon its "slaves" for it's profitability.

James Thomas king was, not surprisingly, martyred. But his split blood only brought more attention to his cause. "You cook it" you serve it! You wash it! You clean it! Became the movements rallying cry.

Very quickly, the Prison Industrial Complex itself learned "compassion" even if only a forced facsimile of genuine compassion. "Lock them up and throw away the key" was transformed, virtually overnight, into "Reintegrate those guys and gals humanely back into society ASAP..."
George and I soon found ourselves in minimum custody. We were, probably, soon to be released anyway, but one day I got a "wild hair" and said "George, to heck with it. Lets just go on the lam... I doubt they'll be wanting us back too bad anyway."

George looked nonplussed at first. Then he got a twinkle in his eye, gave me a devilish grin, and said "Yeah, let's hit the road!!"

We stole some ill fitting duds from the first "solar power drying apparatus" (clothesline) we could find, and then started planning for our future...

"You know, George, I know some folks in L.A. Who run a porn company. Whadda say we hitch on down and see if we can't get us some jobs in the biz. We need to make up for lost time anyway..."

"Do you think they'll still be operating, Bill?"

"Well, I'm pretty sure they will be. The San Fernando Valley has the Hollywood Hills twixt it and downtown L.A. anyway... we might pick us up a 'rad' or two, but it'll be worth it... Besides, what are the only two things that are sure to survive a nuclear catastrophe?"

"Uh, cockroaches and porn?"

"Bingo! Yeah, let's head on down. I can be Lance Biggerstaff, and you can be "Harry Mcshagasty, and we'll see what's shakin' with the hot porno babes,,,"

George gave me that devilish smirk again. Well it's a long ways from the oval office, but, what the heck, lets give it a go...

We walked to the southbound lane of the nearest freeway and stuck out our thumbs.

To be continued.

George Goes To Jail Chapter Three

Well, George and I had barely got our thumbs out when a green cabbed semi wheeled off the road in front of us, kicking up gravel. Wasting no time, we hurried to the passenger side of what we discovered to be a bright sporty Peterbilt and climbed aboard, George going up first.

We were pretty shocked to discover the driver was a woman. "Howdy, boys, git on in and make yourselves right at home… Souix City Sue is my name, and doing L.A. turn around is my game," she added with a chuckle.

Sue was short and chubby, with curly blonde hair. Hard to tell, but probably in her late 40s. Her face was round, almost cherubic, giving her an "elvish" visage. She was dressed in blue denim over alls, and had on cowboy boots. On the top of everything else, she was chewin' on a stubby cigar.

"Well, ma'am, glad to hear it, cause L.A. is just where were trying to get to…" I informed her.

Sue checked her side view mirror and then, when the coast was clear, got us to trucking south… She looked over at me, her brown eyes twinkling. Now you look here, young man, don't you be calling me no ma'am now. Makes me feel about a hunnert years old… Either Souix City Sue, or you can just call me Sue, if you really want to…" She added within what I took to be a well-practiced sing song rhyme…

"Alright, Sue, good to meet you…" I rhymed back at her, "They call me wild Bill, and this here's George."

Sue shook both our hands. "Woo-woo, Wild Bill, huh?! Well, if we stop and play us a poker game, I'll try not to deal you no aces or eights…" She said smiling.

"I'll just make sure I sit with my back to the wall…" I replied, chuckling. "How long you been driving a truck Sue, if you don't mind me asking?"

"Oh since I was about knee-high to a furry little poodle-dog," she said. "About all I want to do… Got the urge to roam the highway is my home, don't you know? Speaking of way on back, you boys want to hear some music? I got this CD here recorded in our nations capital, way a beguiling cartoon-tomato, smiling, on a bikinied woman's body, stretched out alluringly on a hammock."

"Alright! Little Feat, waiting on Columbus! It is a classic," I exulted. "Yeah, lets get our jam on…"

Soon, Souix City Sue, George and I were enjoying a rollicking sing along with "Dixie Chicken," "Spanish Moon," and all the others, as they blasted thru' the trucks remarkably good sound system. The miles thru' the endless San Joaquin Valley, our "nations breadbasket," rolled happily on…

Not far up the Grapevine, shortly after sundown, Souix City Sue pulled over at a truck stop. "You guys got enough to eat on?" She asked.

"Yeah, we got us a little change, Sue. Matter of fact, it's George and I who should be treatin' you as good as you've been to us… And, Sue I want to tell you the truth about something, George and I are a couple escaped convicts."

It didn't seem to faze her. "Well, shucks, everybody's on the run from something or another, I reckon…" She said with an understanding grin.

She graciously allowed George and I to play gentlemen and handle the nozzle while quenching her rigs thirst for diesel.

Then, inside, Sue slid in beside George and the red-vinyl booth. I was beginning to think she was getting sweet on him…

"George, where you from?" She asked with her Midwestern drawl.

"Texas"

"Well, do tell. You know what, you've been looking mighty familiar to me for some reason… They ain't done got you boys on wanted posters already, have they?"

George had grown a short beard, probably why she hadn't recognized him.

"Well, maybe because I used to, once upon a time, live in our nations capital, where Little Feat sang those songs… In the White House, actually. See Sue, I used to run this country…"

"No! George W. Bush, it can't be!"

"Well, I'll be! You know what, honey, I voted for you, both times. I thought you got a raw deal, in fact… Anyway, I don't care what people say, it's sure an honor to be sitting here beside you…" She said hugging her little arms around his shoulder.

George gave me his famous smirk. "Why, thank you Souix City Sue," he said patting her hands.

"Well, I'm just going to get me an autograph, don't you know…" Jumping up, Sue ran over to the magazine rack, grabbed something, and paid the cashier. She handed George a copy of "Guns And Armor." "I guess we'll just borrow the waitress's when she comes around…" Sue said.

"Okay but don't tell her who I am…" He warned.

"Oh don't worry your secrets safe with me, honey," she said reassuringly, patting his shoulder.

"Well, what would you like me to say?" George asked. "Oh, I don't know, maybe, to Souix City Sue, the best trucker west of the Pecos and sign it — Big W#43"

A cute little brunette waitress showed up and, after she jotted down our orders, George used her pen to do just that.

"Heck baby, I'll cherish it always…" Sue told him. "SO, what are your guys plans down in L.A., anyways?"

George and I looked at one another, hesitating. We both probably figured telling her we were planning on getting acting jobs under the stage names of "Lance Biggerstaff and Harry Mcshagnasty" just might be a bit of an over share…

"Uh, we're not quite sure, Sue," I said. "Just figured we'd try to look up an old friend or two. Maybe see if we can find work of some sort or another… How are things down there now days anyways?" I asked, trying to change the subject. "How well have they been recovering from the terrorist attack?"

"Pretty well, actually. Did a heck of a number on the downtown area, but they've been rebuilding pretty good. Sometimes, I doubt they actually miss it all that much… You know what they say about L.A., anyway, don't you? That it's, 'A hundred suburbs in search of a city.'"

We laughed. Getting back in the rig, Sue popped in dire straits "brothers-in-arms," and we started rockin' out to "Money For Nothin'" as we climbed the long grade.

Coming down the other side of the grapevine, I almost held my breath, wondering just what the ol' city of angels was gonna look like… Was downtown gonna look like a gigantic glow-stick, or what?

Finally, it came into view. Pretty much the same vista of endless lights, only far less where downtown used to be. It felt like a punch in the gut.

She pulled her Peterbilt — and that thing was a regular RV, by the way, even had a little shower — off I-5 at an exit in Burbank, near the airport. "Well, bye fellas. God bless you both…" Sweet Sue said. We both hugged her and kissed her on the cheek and wished her the same…

Sue blasted us a couple last "farewells" on her air-horn as we watched her go down the ramp and merge into the river of highway lights.

"Well, what now?" George asked.

"Let's just start walking west. We'll hit a drugstore to pick up a few toiletries, then check into a flea-bag motel somewhere. Try to clean up a little, get our sorry selves to lookin' half-ass 'presentable' for tomorrow…"

"Alright. Sounds like a plan. Better'n any I used to come up with anyway…" he added with a chuckle.

"Steve, meet George W. — ex-leader of the free world, currently an escaped convict…" I said to the CEO of Booty-Licious Productions in Chatsworth the next morning.

"Wow. Pleased to meet you, George. So, you guys want to earn a little dough, huh?" Steve asked.

"Why that and get laid again, for the first time in God-knows-how-long…" George responded, with his famous smirk again.

"Well, I've tried all sorts of weird — and I mean really weird — midgets, fat chicks, you-name-it — 'marketing ploys' before, but, I'll tell you what: this about takes the cake…" Steve said with a bemused smile of his own.

"But, you know what: It'll work! I know it will… Matter of fact, we'll get right on it. We'll start shootin' this afternoon. Just let me make a couple quick calls…"

We were quite shocked, a few hours later, to meet our "co-stars;" Britney Spears and Christina Aguilera.

(To be continued…)

"WILD BILL" BARNES (CONT.)

NICK JONES *It's been a while since this was written by our dear friend, Nick, but we're just now publishing it because we feel like he has a great lesson to teach through his mistakes. In being misunderstood, he helps us realize that we make it hard for people to understand us when we don't understand ourselves. When confronted with adversity, we either take it head on and deal with it, or we attempt to put it off for later by using drugs or partaking in any other defense mechanism we can find. Every one of us struggles with this paradigm, but not many of us can put our pride to the side and share it with the world like Nick has. We first met Nick when he was a young detainee in San Mateo's Hillcrest Juvenile Hall many years ago. He's writing from our office and hopefully there won't be too much time in between when we next see him again...*

Misunderstood

I would like to share with all of you a summery of my life for the past week. I'm going to share my thoughts and hopefully someone reading this can gain some knowledge or be enlightened on how to deal with these problems if you happen to ever run across them.

Well let's see we can start on Monday. Monday I had gotten an offer from a former friend I had been incarcerated with in prison to do some construction work getting paid under the table. For me this was a come up because I have to pay child support and it usually leaves me with close to nothing once I'm done paying bills. So I headed off to work and it went fine, a little more work than I had originally intended but nevertheless it was work. I had forgotten however to call and check in with my first job, working for The Beat Within. I am horrible at remembering to do these things, my mind is always pre occupied with non-sense. Anyways after work my buddy and I decided to go grab a few beers and chill. Now to put you up on game, lately I have been having a problem with drinking. I have been losing weight (which I can't afford) and neglecting my daily responsibilities, simple things like calling into work to let them know where I am.

So after a six pack my buddy decided to call it quits for the day and retire to the pad, me on the other hand was ready for the hard liquor by now. Before my buddy left he even warned me don't be drinking too much, "we have work tomorrow" he told me. I said yes but totally ignored his warning. So I headed off to my friends liquor store and grabbed some Hennessy. I drank to my satisfaction and went home bent out of shape.

Soon as I stepped into the door I heard a mouthful from my mother and father. Annoyed by it I quickly ate and left again to spend the night at a friend's house.

Tuesday when I woke up I felt surprisingly ok. Now instead of taking this as a blessing considering I had work today I didn't pay too much attention to it. I suffered threw the day and wound up drinking by myself at the end of Tuesday. But as I was drinking I was thinking to myself, "Damn I know I got a problem if I'm drinking by myself." But like a natural manipulator I managed to talk myself into believing that I didn't have a problem. I am very good at being totally honest with myself but lately I have been trying to convince myself to keep getting messed up.

Prior to this week I have been going threw it with my baby's momma over custody and visitation with my two darling little boys. It hurts me a bunch not to be able to come home to them everyday and I figured that I am just getting drunk to try and erase the feeling of not being able to see them. As a result I told myself to slow down and I did for that night. So I dragged myself to the local Bart station and hoped on headed for the pad, thinking how good my nice cold pillow would feel next to my face, man was I right I passed out on contact.

Wednesday when I awoke I had I slight hangover. I very rarely get hangovers, just never happens to me. So on this day I was running late to the meeting place where all the workers hook up to catch a ride to the construction spot. By the time I got there the truck had left. I was mad at myself and instead of doing the right thing which would have been to catch a bus or taxi to the spot I decided to go drink all day to put my self disappointment at ease. I have a huge problem with being perfect in my own eyes and when I feel like I messed up even in the slightest of ways I usually punish myself by drinking or doing something self destructive. I notice this but still to this day haven't been able to find the right way to just accept it and move on holding myself together. I am too hard on myself mainly because I am always hearing people tell me, "Nick, you have to get a place of your own" or "Nick, you need another job so you can have more money to do the things you do." The most famous one of them all comes from the mother of my children, "Nick, the kids need this and that and whatever" but I've learned to ignore her because she still hasn't worked a day since my first son was born, 4 years ago. So hearing this all the time makes me feel like I am behind everyone else trailing to catch up. so I feel I need to work harder and I usually drive myself so hard that I end up not getting anything done because my mind is running in 7 different directions and I skip from place to place doing the very minimum that I need to do.

Well before I run on let me get back to the story, as Wednesday progressed I had made up my mind to go drink the whole day away. Now I don't know about you but I am a 23-year-old father of two and am currently not in a great situation financially speaking. Shhh even if I missed the construction job I still have another job with the Beat. Again like I said I have a horrible problem remembering things even though they are important.

As evening approached I was drunk shooting the shhh with my boys hanging out like everything was alright. Man was I wrong. I went home hoping that my mom had hooked up one of her famous dinner plates, she always cooks good food. Instead I wound up shoving two hot pockets down with some ice tea. That night I sat on the porch as I usually do to soak up the days events and evaluate if I had made this day a productive one or not. This one was a no brainier...nope!

This brought me to the familiar mind state in which I start feeling sorry for myself which leads to wanting to get messed up just so that I don't have to deal with my problems. But by this time in life I am starting to get worried if I am not going to make it in the real world once I don't have people to lean on when I feel like being lazy. This is a big concern to me and I am trying to deal with it myself so that in the future when no one is there to help keep me in bright spirits I can do it myself. The problem with this is that I don't trust myself all that much. I always try to find the easy way out and when I do finally decide to handle it I think of all the work and get discouraged because I am so damn lazy.

So after a few cigarettes and a good mind tampering I decided to head over to my older brothers apartment to chill with him. I hadn't spoken with him in about a week but I know he was doing alright from what I know. So when I got there he was flashing his new medical marijuana card in my face juiced cause he had copped on some "Cali Kush." So we put one in the air, another bad idea cause tree's have the same affect on me as liquor does. So we ate, watched a movie, and passed out.

Now after Wednesday comes Thursday but we didn't make it that far. Around 2:30 in the morning I was sleeping on the couch when the task force kicked in the door of the apartment and rushed in. I was caught totally off guard and tried to get up and focus because at first I didn't know who it was and I needed to be able to protect myself had it been someone trying to rob us. The police put us all in cuffs and made us stand outside in the freezing cold with nothing on but some boxers while they ram-sacked my brothers place. All I was thinking to myself was although we have it good in comparison to people in other countries, I still felt like they were messed up for this. I mean yeah we did the crimes we did and we paid our dues to society along with court fees and my brother always checks in with his parole officer so why do they have to come mess with us during our sleep. I mean shhh we work too, feel me?

Nevertheless at the end of the search they had confiscated 2 ounces of weed and a 45.mm automatic pistol. I instantly flipped out, not in fright of myself but my brother. He is currently on parole and already has 2 strikes. The police ruffed me up a little and told me to shut up. I guess the drink was still in me 'cause I didn't stop and they ended up taking me down to the station along with my brother and his friend. After they felt I had sobered up they released me. Usually I would rejoice in there face that I am getting out but instead I did something I had never done in my life, I walked out of the holding tank out the door and then right

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continued from previous page

back into the police station to ask for information on what had happened to my brother. They told me that he has been picked up on charges for the gun and they dropped the weed case 'cause it didn't matter.

Now before I go on let me put you youngsters and older heads that don't know up on game. The police work for the state and the state wants nothing but money so they send the police out to go arrest others and bring them to the states jails so that they can make money off us. It is all about the dollars in the end, just like everything else. Go figure, anyways I was completely distraught once I found out the news. Tears instantly feel from my face and a wave of rage and sadness consumed my mind and body. I called my dad as soon as I left to notify him of the situation. He was pissed.

I went home and like the great dad that he is once again sat me down and explained that in the end it was my brother's fault he ended up in that situation and not the cops. No matter how much I wanted to blame the cops I knew he was right, I just wanted things to be different.

As the sun came up and Thursday began for working America I walked around in a daze over what had just happened. So much in fact that I didn't even think about work, drinking, smoking... nothing just the fact that I lost the closest person to me on the face of this earth. I am going to share some personal information with you to let you know why this means even more to me than another person who's brother had just been arrested on his possible 3rd strike case.

When I was 2 and my brother was 3 my birth mother had abandoned us. Just straight up left and never ever came back. My dad was never there from the beginning and we were placed in an orphanage for a few months before the two of us were adopted by my wonderful parents. So having knowledge of this brought me and my brother closer to each other. We grew up inseparable, except when we were 15 and 16 and the juvenile court judge had put us on non-association with each other. Even up until last Thursday we were always doing things together and it gave me a sense of security knowing he was always there for me. He always will be and I for him but if things work out for the worse it won't be the same anymore.

As the day came to a close I sat down and had my few cigarettes and evaluated the day. Once again I had not accomplished anything and this angered me a lot combined with the hate and frustration I was already going threw with my brother. Once again like I have mentioned before these combinations of thoughts forced me into the downward spiral of feeling sorry for myself which ultimately results in me getting messed up which is always the easy way out. I went to my room and paged threw a photo album while I listened to oldies until I passed out.

Friday morning I woke up with a heavy heart, still emotionally bruised by yesterday's events. I thought to myself, damn I haven't seen my kids all week what the hell is wrong with me? I gave my baby's momma a call and told her I'd make dinner and be over in a few. After making spaghetti with some home made meat sauce my mom taught me to make I headed to Target to grab my boys some Superman underwear and a couple packs of socks along with some pajamas to attempt to make up for not coming by the whole week.

Once I got there we all sat down and ate, tried on the clothes and played. Once it was time for me to leave I remembered that I had left some plates over at their house. So I asked my baby's momma for the plates and being the ignorant childish person she is she had to say something smart. "What, does your stupid mom think I stole them?" Now usually I ignore her kid-like remarks but with last nights events still fresh in my mind I was irritated and snapped back saying "your mom's stupid, witch" we started arguing and she walked to the door and told me to get out. Me being hard-headed I told her no and we started arguing even louder.

By this time her mother had came into the room and was trying to tell me to stop and be respectful to her house even though her daughter was standing there disrespecting every person in my family's name. Remind you I am usually cool about these things and tend to reason with her mom

NICK JONES (CONT.)

but not today. I told her mom straight up, "You need to talk to your daughter she is in the wrong." She ignored me and started to smile as I tried to explain my story to her that drove me over the edge. Even in my moments of rage I still always remember not to put hands on anyone 'cause I know it's morally wrong, so instead I thought I'd talk shhh about her but say true stuff so it will hurt. Man, am I good at that, in less than a minute I had the two of them pissed. I ended up calling my baby's momma a foul name and I guess that was it for her she threw the plates at me and came up to me and spit in my face.

Now normally anyone who does this to me will end up costing me to spend hours digging them there grave but I told myself no chill and do things the right way. Since me and my baby's momma had been in and out of court for the last 2 years fighting for custody I wanted to report it to the police, I wasn't going to file charges but nevertheless wanted to get a report to show the judge at our next court date. I didn't have my phone so I asked her mom, who I looked at as the most responsible adult in the room to be the one I can rely on to make the right decisions, if I could use her phone to call the police. She said no and my baby's momma raced for the phone and called the police herself, but on me. I listened in on what she said and she flat out lied saying I had pushed her. Immediately after I heard this I turned to her mom and said, "I am going to stay here till the police get here but when they get here I don't want any lies!" I looked her directly in her eyes and thought that since she is a grown woman she would tell the police the right thing like any self respecting woman would do. But as I assumed I was wrong, her mom is still 12 years old in her head.

When the police got there I raced to them to explain my story. All the cop did was told me to turn around and put my hands behind my back. I complied fearing that it would only make things worse if I didn't. The officer did not even pay attention when I was talking instead put me in the police cruiser and went to talk to my baby's mom. She told them her sorry ass lie and I was completely defenseless. The courts always side with the mom. I was taken down to the station while the police were still talking to my baby's mom and her mom. Once I got to the station I was mentally preparing myself to do some time, something I learned to do having gone to juvy, jail and prison. But to my surprise I heard the other officer that had responded to the call radio in to the police officer that was about to book me to let me go 'cause he could tell that my baby's momma was lying.

I was released and I made sure to flip the system the bird on the way out for not believing me. The thing that pissed me off the most about this whole situation was that she had spit on my face, insulted me, and then I went to jail and I am innocent. This is just another sad but true case of our fabulous court system doing someone in for something that they didn't do and its all possible because of sorry ass people like my baby's mom and her mom.

Once I was totally free I smoked about three cigarettes 'cause I was relieved I didn't have to go to jail. I went directly home and spent time playing with my little sister and brother, something I almost never do because they are always off in there own world playing games. It made me at ease to finally be able to enjoy the cost free joys of life, the things we usually take for granted because our fast paced lives usually distance these thoughts from our conscience.

Since then I have been laying low just handling my business and trying to stay away from my baby's mom and the police. I hope that some of you can gain some knowledge and use a few of the experiences in one week in my life to help you sort out how to deal with these problems if they ever present themselves to you. Although I didn't deal with all of them in the right manner my truthfulness will hopefully allow you do differentiate what's right and what's not.

So until next time guys, think straight and positive and ladies... don't call the cops and lie on your baby's daddy you might need him later on in life. Peace out.

E-MONEY ***This next writer is one of the greatest thinkers we've ever come across. And he's been sharing his thoughts with us since the creation of The Beat Within happened. We really appreciate what he has to say and have to apologize for our delay in publishing his pieces, but we've been going through some things on this side. We won't go into that, but if you want to know more about The Beat's current situation, please read the editor's note on the inside of the cover. Anyhow, back to our powerful friend E-Money and this week's installment of knock-out writing. First, he writes about his fallen family and friends. You can really get a sense of how many people he's lost and how sad it is to see them listed like that. He talks about everything from the ironies of a corrupt system to the foolishness of those around him. He's really an epic writer and although we rather have him out here with us, it's still nice to hear from him. Get a taste of a Beat dinosaur writing from San Quentin State Prison...***

Haunted House

It's like I'm stuck in the past with future expectations trying to keep these anticipated visions vivid in my mind. You can call it my desperate attempt to catch up with time. But yet I hear the voices of the decease coming to me in dark shadows when I'm sleep trying to get me to accept this fate as if I have already arrived at judgment. I know I'm in hell but heaven still shines my way. Birthed as God's child living in these devil days.

Being in prison is equivalent to a haunted mansion a place that "screams abnormally." Damn, is I'm in a horror movie running slow as the world turns fast around me? Those who decide to trespass these walls is either crazy or insane for this place is two steps away from suicide. Don't try to find a good night sleep in here. Your disturbed thoughts become the voices and shadows of the haunted, I wonder how many people actually died in here? For I keep on seeing crazy shhh like spirits from the corner of my eyes — is I'm seeing things or is my mind playing tricks on me? Regardless of the fiction or fact I keep my back up against this wall saying, "Homeboy, give me some space! It's nothing personal." My every action is a result of calculated steps for I refuse to become a victim of mathematical subtraction to these demons, for I can almost read their thoughts and I can see the "additional hate" on their minds. I find myself constantly wanting up out of here but every haunted door I come to is locked. I know time will eventually bring me peace, but until then "God I will worship and Jesus blood on this cross I will keep.

I look around me and see the souls of those who are eternally condemned here and it's like I become a character in someone else's bad dream. Or is this my nightmare and I'm on Elm Street dreaming "bloody murder" with visions of Freddy when I'm sleep. I wake up to different episodes of devilish stuff. Another struggle has gave up in that soldiers corpse under that sheet. I guess you can say, "he had enough." It wasn't until I come to prison that I realized that "you got a lost world stuck in hell, dying hoping through death they can once again experience heaven.

This is a revolving door of the misfit. Outlaws considered black sheeps upon modern society. A waste land that the world use for human disposal or better yet a tax pay off, "Your donation has been a goodwill." Can't you see that's a lie in desperate search for a partial truth if you were to rewind it it'll say... "Badwill." You threw away the key to a child's father and you just can't understand "why society is of growing violence?" Have you ever heard the saying, "You think too fast and you hope too hard." A broken home brings a broken heart and a broken heart brings "corruption." I'm not Doctor Phil, but it's easy to see that "taken advantage" has manipulated your anger and fear given you a painted illusion in return. Don't blame me, blame "ignorance," he's the one that got your grandson locked up. A 3rd strike and you're out! This ain't baseball hut uh... you add it up.

This must be Halloween in a haunted house for why I see all these inmates with this county orange on? They told me I was prison bound now I have graduated to prison blues. Considered a threat to safety and security of an institution now I'm in a white jump suit advertised as "hole material." Stuck in all these strange colors around all these strange people in these strange places got me desperately looking to return to the familiar...

My Fallen Civilization

"Everything in this world is either coming to rest or fallen to pieces. At the same time the forces which interlock and give the world its coherence — in time and size as well as in space — are weakening. We knew that even as children, but we had no idea what the time of the end would be like. How could we? Yet now I am living in those times."
-Stephen King's Wastelands

This is my life. My memories is filled with fallen loved ones smiling at me in my dreams as if they were still here. And I can't help but to wake up with a tear in my eyes. I can't help but to vision my own death and wondering is I'm blessed for still standing or is it my time hasn't come to fall yet! I often seek refuge in the past remembering when I didn't have a worry in the world as if that time was going to last forever. The unexpected has put a scar across my heart before a tear came out my eyes and it was like nature has robbed me blind when she decided to take my loved ones one by one from among my time. I know one day I will also reap this fate, wondering is I'm going to still feel my body as it deteriorate. My worst fear is eternally being stuck six feet deep spiritually still woke when the rest of the world think I'm sleep.

I sit in a prison cell one of society's predictions for a black man the other one is death. They say chess is the game of life and I've been fighting without my queen, I'm surprised I haven't lost yet. Despite my current standing, my back is still up against this wall watching my soldiers fall. I got to pull a trick from up under my sleeve or get fucked raw. I wonder why I keep on visioning death before I even had my chance to live life? Something ain't right. Maybe it's because that's all my eyes can see. I take a look at my fallen society and it's not like it isn't a possibility.

My grandfather (cancer) is rested in peace and gone. Now it's my turn to be my family's backbone, the head of my throne. This lion is now full grown. Can't you see a man's beard and hear the roar of dominance in my voice every time you come near? I will be nothing less than an example of success for the rest of my family tree. Making sure for everyone that fall to death there would be three born seeds. I may have given this penitentiary wasted time but watch me produce and see my soul through my grandchildren defeat time.

I see my auntie Wonda (cancer) smiling down on me from heaven and I'm smiling back saying, "Auntie, watch me get 'em." And I keep my cousin Ken (asthma) in my heart I can't live without him. I haven't forgot about you Uncle Smokie (cancer). You just as crazy as you want to be! (Smile) and I won't be preaching this game to y'all if it wasn't from the chicken bone that came from my auntie Gussy. (Mysterious) I still see the tear in your eyes uncle Donald (AIDS) I'm gon' live on and do right. And I'm always thanking my uncle O'dell (mysterious) for keeping me game tight. And to my grandfathers and grandmothers I never met, I see a unity absent of fear. Every time I think about my grandma dear (old age) and I can't forget about my little cousin Sa'ronda (sickle cell) God took her when she just was a baby doll. I just wanted to say, "I love y'all..."

Until death come sweep me off my feet, I'm gon' be thickening this blood and showing my gratitude and love to all my loved ones that's above. The end of time will come with a smile on my face. Making sure I go out with a full belly and a full plate. Today has arrived with my family on my mind. I thank God for letting me be one of y'all kind. We gon' be forever standing tall and stomping our boots. And when we take our last breath we gon' be screaming "roots!"

Poverty

"A 9 years old boy is viciously shot at for stealing a piece of candy. He means no harm. But poverty makes him enemy number one."

It seems as if a silent war has been waged against us and crack cocaine, heroine and other designer drugs are the nuclear bomb under alias name here to kill us all. I see the results of this poisonous chemical in the deterioration of my environment making it a dead zone when it was once fostered my love and care. I walk down vacant streets accompanied by memories of when they used to be filled and I can't help but to feel a tear run from my eyes for my fallen civilization! The fear of murder now roam my streets of poverty restricting both adults and young children to the restoration of pleasures machines (video games, television, etc.) instead of the social indulgence of fellow neighbors where strength and unity is born. Young minds are covered in black hoods skillfully hunting for the prey of their reflection that dress a separate soul. Vengeance is the controller of their thoughts and a kind of pseudo-thinking is created that murder is going to heal their pain. The respect for their elders is a joke. It's kind of like the children from the crack era is punishing their parents for being born to poverty.

Morals and ethics died on the back of our grandparents, wrapping it up in a casket of a rose and gently placed by their grave stones. Their basic instructions before leaving earth (Bible) papers are used to smoke marijuana when there isn't no Zig-Zags and their godly cross is sold to the devil for some dope. Absent of these historical leaders, off springs has come immune to following the tails of rats (snitches) selling their already deprived environment to the hands of the enemy just to get high. The results of this poverty got our ancestors turning over in their graves and dying a double death.

The tears that are developed in a lost people's eyes are landed in blood manufactured to the infliction of violence and pain towards each other. A simple argument no longer purchase a fist fight, but instant thoughts of death. It seems as if the price and value of life has took a tremendous loss. Disagreement brings upon false theories of "suspect" and menacing beliefs that the other is working with the enemy. If this was the Old Western Wild West the reason would be, "that boy died because he refused to look his opponent eye to eye."

Innocent people are killed because investigation seems to go no further than the ignorance in their murderer minds. Assumptions become a perceived fact when entangled with the intoxication of drugs and actions of illusions are born. Safety becomes at risk in neighborhoods for danger has U-hauled its self in and the children in which its around are the ones who help it unpack.

Like I said in the beginning — a silent war has been declared. Open your eyes can't you see the genocide? Young black boy you are now labeled endangered species. I hate to break the news but genocide walks and talks with you everyday and yet your blindness tricks you that it's advancement. How can you say: "We have come such a long way" when our youth is getting more violent by the day?

All I hear in my ghetto is a gang of questions but no answers. It seems like nobody want to take the responsibility for why things in Bayview Hunters Point are the way they are. Instead that blame is passed down like a hot potato and lefted in the gutter with the rest of our hope. It seems like my environment has become a warehouse of fantasy minds running from the reality of destruction. Poverty is responsible for them selling their deceased parents home. Poverty is the reason for AIDS, cancer, malfunctions. Poverty help kill that boy. Poverty invented prostitution and furthermore Poverty is the reason a young child screams out from hunger pains while at the same time his/her father is gunned down in the violent poverty stricken streets. Who's going to feed his child? I remember the sadness I felt when I learned the polar bear was endangered to becoming extinct. Pity on me for not feeling this way about me and my black race. I leave y'all with the words of (George Bernard Shaw and his preface to Major Barbosa) who give it to y'all raw and uncut. "Our laws make laws impossible: our liberties destroy of all freedom: our property is organized robbery: Our morality is an impudent hypocrisy: our wisdom is administered by inexperienced or mal-experienced dupes: our power wielded by cowards and weaklings, and our honor false in all its points. I am a enemy of the existing order for good reasons... The greatest of evils and the worst of crimes is poverty..."

Young minds — if the world were in your hands, would you carry it? If E-Money asked you to come tight this silent war with me would you do so? I send my love to The Beat and all its participants!

I just got my first piece back entitled "Stuck." Thank you I'm still waiting to hear from you though.

E-MONEY (CONT.)

War Stories

It's like I'm stuck in a world of prison politics desperately looking to find my way back home. A place where hatred is supreme and pain is its visionary blood bath. The minds of this place is tainted, dipped in wickedness. We are all at the end of revelations ladies and gentlemen, they have been judged. I walk on the deadly grounds of spilled blood, mopped up, resume program. It's like nobody cares! Up in here life is to the measurement of dirt. A multiple of insane minds influenced dangerously from the air borne chemicals used to clean that boys' brains up.

It's nothing more heartbreaking to know that poverty restricts the family of the deceased to rescue his lifeless body. Therefore, his funeral is accompanied by jailhouse worms, nats, and rats looking to feed off his victimized flesh that lies in the depth of a prison cemetery. I guess you can say his living nightmare has become reality, "to still be serving time after death." My current destiny is painted in blood behind the walls of this prison concrete. It's a jungle so my actions stay ready for war, making the ground scream from the rubbing pains of this manufactured steel. If it's an eye for an eye, I try to live it — and if it's a weapon for a weapon than I'm with it. I live by the code, "if you stay ready you don't have to get ready," daily visualizing the future unexpected. Hoping my third eye doesn't fail me in science. It's all a game of social studies and mathematics letting this literature elevate both my actions and mind to a predestined victory for I'm looking to score a grade "A" on judgment day. And yes, I hate accompanying thoughts of evil, but when you're living in hell you must fight fire with fire.

I can see the frowns behind their smiles and their eyes tell me what their minds are thinking. They are the children of "666," flirting with the devil, demon possess trying to rob me of my soul. Most of these dudes is overdosed in hatred, walking zombies, just haven't yet found their casket. They come from the seeds of the rotten apple the serpent, used to entice Eve.

I was born to struggle so I have murdered that punk grieve. Life is what it is, so my heart go pump a revolutionary thump until I can no longer breathe.

Kids, please don't try this story at home it is so overrated. This game come with no controls. You're going to lose trying to play it. As a matter of fact, nobody wins in the end. We are all economic contributions to the "unknown." You murder him they murder you, just another San Quentin death row tiresome picture repeatedly shown.

JOHNNIE MICHAELS ***We really respect this poet's aka old friend's opinion and value the emotions he expresses, especially this week with his three poems. The first one is our personal favorite because the last two are of his romantic endeavors and how much he appreciates them. Still good writing but wait 'til you get a load of "Change Gotta Come Fast." He's brilliant in how he starts off speaking about how jail has influenced him and then he goes into why we should be teaching the younger generation, so they won't feel like they don't have any options but jail or death. We feel him because that's what we're doing at The Beat, or at least we're attempting to with all of our might. Johnnie is a natural born leader and educator writing from Old Folsom in Represa, CA. You'll be amazed at the things he says as we were when reading his poetry, (especially the first one). We met Johnnie many years ago when he was youngsta coming out of SF/YGC.***

All About You

Heaven to me is to lay between your legs
To hold you, touch you, kiss you
Slow and easy cause we got all night
As our bodies intertwine we clutch real right
I look you in your sexy eyes and I say I love you
Girl you're a blessing, a dream come true
A once in a lifetime friend, your so good for me
I respect and love you as much as my own family

Life is crazy and it's full of confusion too
Friends become enemies, enemies become friends
Blood is thicker than water, but mud is too
It's amazing how we met with paper and pen
Started off platonic and precocious, now true to heart friends

Your inner beauty is too sweet in a raw and real way
Pizzazz, vivacious, regal, loyal wit much grace
Take it slow and let it flow, don't be quick to rush
Life and love ain't complicated, it's what we make it.

I got your back girl, no matter who you wit'
Friends till death do us apart for eternities
We started off platonic and precocious with each other
Now we're trusting true to heart friends!

Thank You

I love you for you, all that you are
Your style beauty and grace
Beautiful essence of a real woman
Smile is brighter than a billion stars

The woman of my many dreams
Became a true 'nuff reality
I'm so glad to have you in my life
You're the best thing to ever happen to me.

Hell is loneliness, heaven is your love
I was cold as ice before we met
Now I'm warm and anxiously await your touch

I just want you to know
If I was to die tonight
I would not be mad at all
Once I was weak, now 100% strong

Thank you for many taught lessons
Showing me its okay to love and trust again
I'll forever love and respect you for eternity
And in "we" for will remain intense friends!

Change Gotta Come Fast

Long nights and it's cold
Hell is hot and my actions are bold
Condemned to die in this living hell
Twenty-four hours every day, trapped in a cell
Imagination, fantasy with crooked thoughts
Heart once soft now solid as a rock
Family and friends done blew in the wind
Misery loves company here in prison
Misguided love false friendship is a must
Respect confused for fear, geographical we're force to trust
Never understood how smart we all are
Yet we do the same bad stuff that lands us behind bars
Drugs and alcohol plus misplaced hate and anger
Rocked us and tore our people's apart
The devils will never discriminate as long as your money good
And they got you hooked by the heart
Historicity is not to be ignored pay attention
Why are you living what you willing to die for?
Frustration plus hate equals incarceration
Catch a third strike, you got a permanent vacation
Why do all the good folks die young
Get up, stand strong for our beliefs
The government silences us with his gun
Torture is no longer just a physical thing
Twenty-three hours stuck in a cell, with life or time
Isolation, I know y'all fell me?
Time for us to wake up see the truth
Bogus laws being passed to benefit the rich and famous
Not the poor or any of the youths
Self educate and stop hatin' on the next
Put a condom on every time you have sex
H.I.V., AIDS, alcohol, drugs is not livin'
Either you'll die or, spend precious years in prison
Please to all the young, wise up and rise up
To all the older folks, help save our youth
Let's put our pride away and back 'em up
If we don't do it now and show them what it is
All the children all over the world
Black, Mexican, white, Asian, etc.
Will keep growing up lost, confused, and may
Only to "live to die" young as ghetto kids.

Give Up The Keys

ERIC FOSTER ***Writing from the Richard J. Donovan State Correctional Facility in San Diego (CDC), CA, veteran Beat Without writer Eric Foster passes on the wisdom he has acquired along the way. Although he is doing time, this is another example of how a determined individual can use his time to learn the lessons now that might have kept him from prison in the first place — and which might help others reading what he has to say to avoid a similar fate. "Give Up The Keys" is an effort to make us understand that when we insist on being "in control," we too often drive ourselves off symbolic cliffs. The Beat is proud to be able to share with our readers the lessons Eric has learned, in the hopes that some will take them to heart.***

I'd like to express my love, props, and respect for "The Beat" and all the readers. Let me say it also is an honor to be noticed by respectful people who demonstrate positive change. I believe each one of us is in a form of change. And if you read The Beat I see potential for it to manifest in a productive way.

I'm no different from anyone doing time in a cell or a dorm. I don't look for the differences I may have from the next person. No, today I look at the similarity. In doing so, I've connected to get answers to some of my problems/issues. If we really stop being self-centered, we learn, understand and find answers. In life I've learned that sometimes opportunity knocks very softly.

When I stop and think hard, I can remember a lot from my childhood years. I can call to mind all the times I abused people close to me, just taking their words for granted. One day I even went so far as to put my hands on my children's mother, which is a very uncaring and shameful thing for me to have done. With that being said, also I tell you I'm not proud of it so I will boast not. My major point is this: indeed, you will always reap what you sow.

Never will I forget my past or where I come from (South Central Los Angeles). And let the message be this — it's not about where I come from, but about where I am going. A lot of times we let the past conclude our future, quite possibly our spirit as well. I once thought I was a real gangster/convict, till I found out Eric is a nice person. Today I like him and his qualities. I'm sure someone out there can relate to what I am about to share. I can remember so many people in my neighborhood telling me I was not any good. Or that I'd never amount to anything. Well, in time I actually accepted it as if it were fact. As a result, I never felt enthusiastic about anything, only the negative.

If we t out people's opinion of us control our reality, something is wrong. The problem is self-esteem, plain self-worth. I had many plans and dreams. One was to become a professional baseball player. Some place along the way, I lost sight of my dream. Please don't lose sight of yours.

There are my younger years that I sometimes wish I could change the most. Clearly as if it was yesterday, I recall my step-father telling me, "One day you will mind somebody." Still, all I kept on being was a knucklehead. Now I am minding somebody, and they're COs, even though I've changed my life totally to positive. Today I live with the fact while I'm doing time, my stepfather passed away, never to see the little knucklehead he raised finally doing the right thing. I'm telling you, it's not a nice thing seeing family and friends die while you're doing time. Nor is it a happy feeling watching your kids grow up in pictures over the years. So remember, it takes only a minute to get into trouble, but it may take a lifetime to get out of it.

Prison is a very degrading place. All the so-called rules and regulations cause all the more chaos. Think of how it is living in a 6 by 9 cell with another man. Every time one of you defecates, you're smelling each other's waste, which is plain unhealthy and not human. I'm sure everyone's heard the saying, "If you don't like it, then don't come to prison." Well, I have a question to ask: If we say we hate jail, prison or CYA, and that we love ourselves, why is it we continue to subject ourselves to this type of lifestyle? Of a truth, it's only a slow form of suicide. Most of us do it I believe because everything else is foreign to us. We simply don't know how to live productively.

Once a good friend told me, "Eric, give up the keys before you wreck." I did need to let someone else do the driving. My way surely was not working because it only got me a 7-year prison term. Since most of the people that wanted to help me have jobs and go home when they want, and are living life on life's terms, I came to the conclusion that they might know what they're talking about. So what I did was take the cotton out of my ears and put it my mouth. And today I can tell you, giving up the keys was the best and wisest thing I've done in a long time. My friend that asked me to give up the keys also said, "The Lord had to roll up his sleeves when he reached down to get me out of the pit." Let this be faith that anyone can change with genuine effort.

One of the saddest things is seeing many people get life to actually GET life. Which means it takes them a life sentence before they see what a normal life is really like. Normal people get up and go to work and school in the morning. They pay bills and drive nice cars. Normal people have fun with family and are there for each other. They don't have to make collect calls begging for a money order, and they surely don't have to smell each other defecate.

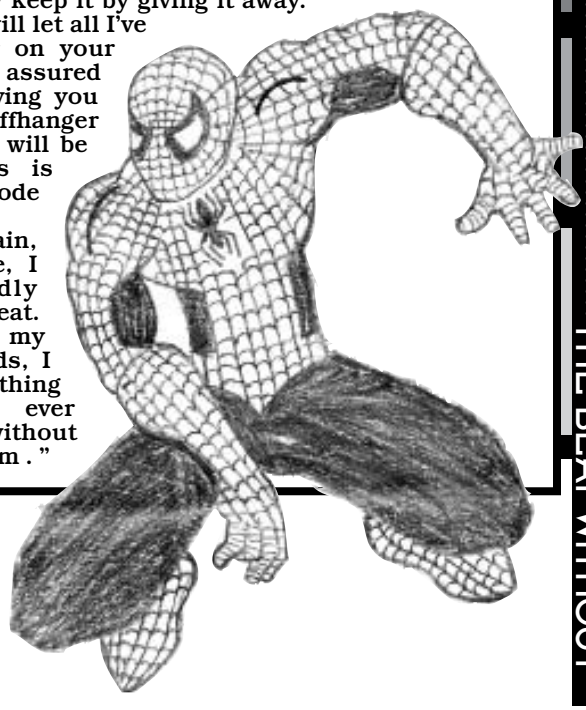
Whoever may hear or read these words of mine, if you're lost and don't know what to do, or just can't see light at the end of the tunnel, trust me — all you need to do is give up those keys. Besides, real friends tell you what you need to hear, not what you want to hear. A "fair weather friend" comes a dime a dozen. And "real friend" comes maybe once every other season. Should you ever find a real fri4end, let them be as one of a precious jewel in your eyes.

Don't ever let ego or pride step in 6the way of the real you. I did it for years and paid almost the ultimate price. A wise person once said, "Nature has given us two ears and one mouth that we may hear more than we speak." Some of us have a great deal of conflict living as they say a "square life." News flash — it's not a square life, it's called living a responsible life. Of a truth, if you can't make the right choices in life... CDC and CYA will surely make the right choices for you.

Hopefully, this is the season for each one of us as an individual to "Man up," and focus on what is really of importance, which is our life. We can't allow ourselves to stay part of the problem. We must allow ourselves to become part of the solution.

There is a lot more that I would love to share with everyone, because it was freely given to me. And I can only keep it by giving it away. So for now, I will let all I've wrote simmer on your mind. Rest assured that I am leaving you with a cliffhanger because more will be revealed. This is simply episode one...

Once again, before I close, I wholeheartedly thank The Beat. And with my final few words, I say this: "Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm."



And let the message be this — it's not about where I come from, but about where I am going.

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P. L. DANIELS ***If we gave awards here at The Beat like professional sports do, this new writer would certainly be a strong contender for Rookie Of The Year. He's a first time writer from the Illinois Department of Corrections and he sent the following ideas this past October. As you'll see from his writings, his ideas are brilliant and challenging. If you are easily put on the defensive, we advise you to prepare yourself for the beliefs this great man releases onto our publication. The rest of you will absolutely appreciate him for taking a stand on certain issues, for in our world today it's rare to find someone who can express them so passionately. Thank you P.L. Daniels... We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.***

That's The Way The Cookie Crumbles

I know you never planned,
for prison to be,
the place where I'd become a man.
Looking into my eyes,
hearing my newborn cries.
So proud,
of your 1st born boy.
The apple of your eye,
a bundle of joy.
Sometimes life's design,
has it's own mind.
Things occur,
and from there,
it's all a blur.
I can't help,
but ruminate,
and yet,
it's much more than fate.
Something that's almost sinister,
at the same time though,
you and I both know,
it's not like.
if things had of turned out right,
I would've been a minister.

My Dreams

My dreams,
are what keep me holding on.
My blanket,
like Charlie Brown.
They are all I have,
they are what stand between me,
my stability,
and going mad.
They are relief,
like aid to Africa.
A momentary window,
like a breeze off a lake,
on a stuffy summer night.
Like licking the cake mix residue out of the bowl,
it's good for the soul.
My dreams are all that I possess,
they are my only recourse.
For a span I'm not here,
there's no dread,
there's no fear.
No concrete and steel,
no lukewarm meal.
Free as an eagle, flying high above,
soaring into the wind.
"Up and at 'em Daniels, it's chow time!"
I'll hold on,
until I can dream again.

Things Can Always Be Worse

Complain, complain, complain,
that's all you do,
and you know I'm not lying on you.
I'm sick and tired of hearing you whine,
all of the time.
I don't have this,
I wish I had that.
Why can't I ever get a break?
Why are there no potatoes with the steak?
There are people dying right now from starvation.
You're not even close,
to that type of situation.
What about the loved ones you have?
What about the meal you just ate?
What about the bum,
who sleeps in a cardboard box?
At least you have a bed,
to rest your head.
The water you drink,
without pausing to think,
is priceless.
In some villages in Africa,
they'd really be mad at cha'.
The same water you use to wash your face,
they would consider that water you continue to waste.
The clothes on your back,
the shoes on your feet.
Imagine having to choose between,
what you'll eat or your feet.
You have your health.
What about the HIV infected newborn child?
He/she had no choice in the matter.
We take so much for granted,
I am guilty as well.
I try not to whine,
even as I sit in a cell.
I am blessed beyond measure,
an abundance of treasure.
before you get mad,
focus on what you have 1st.
Never forget,
things can always be worse.

Flipping The Script

Sometimes people can be extremely critical of felons who proclaim to have changed for the better. I'll be the 1st to concede that a lot of us are NOT as sincere about our commitment to change for the better as we may declare. The evidence in many cases makes the naysayer overwhelmingly accurate. I myself have heard guys say, "Once I get out I'm never coming back", only to see them return to prison a month or two later. But having said that, I do know that there are individuals who have sincerely and wholeheartedly changed for the better. I'm speaking of genuine and meaningful change.

Which is a doubly difficult task, when you consider prison is not an environment that is conducive to changing for the better. There's a lot of hard work that goes into combating and resisting all of the negativity one is faced with daily in prison. This is not a touchy feely place. There are a lot of heartened hearts walking around. Successful, peaceful, goal oriented inmates often become the targets of lost self hating and self loathing inmates. Your advances are constant reminders of their perceived failures and shortcomings.

Real change in prison is a very difficult task. Nevertheless, it is possible. Changing for the better involves a tremendous amount of effort as well as commitment. Maintaining the status quo takes no effort at all. I speak from experience. I myself have changed for the better. I call it "flipping the script". I know what is possible. I know 1st hand how hard it is. I know 1st hand all of the challenges one faces when they decide to tackle such a thing. It's far from a cake-walk. You not only have to contend with overcoming your own coping deficiencies and self imposed obstacles, you have to contend w/staying physically safe and also remain focused on your objective.

Also, I want it to be clear that my decision to change is not a part of some scheme. I am doing a LIFE W/OUT PAROLE sentence for crimes I confessed to willingly. I admit my guilt. I regret my actions and I have remorse. But my point is, I did not "flip the script" to impress a parole board. There's no parole board to impress. I WANTED to be a better me. Despite the fact I'm doing life. And there are others just like me who have sincerely changed for the better.

I've had guys in here challenge my authenticity as it relates

P. L. DANIELS (CONT.)

to changing for the better. They'll commonly say, "Man…the only reason you are chilling out and staying out of trouble is you have a TV and radio. If they take that TV and radio you'll snap out and you know it. "At 1st I gently laugh and then I begin to explain how incorrect that kind of rationale is. I say, "I've been doing better for over 5 years now. There's no faking it for that long. It's virtually impossible. Life and its circumstances are the same problems that I've always been faced with. I've been able to successfully rewire my brain (for lack of a better analogy). My way of thinking is different. Look at all of the rich people you hear about that stay in trouble with the law. You hear about them all of the time. They seemingly have everything and yet they continue to find themselves caught up in situations that are detrimental. The point is, you can have 100 TV's and radios (or be rich) and if you're a jerk, you're still a jerk. No amount of wealth or distractions is going to change that."

I usually wind it down with this, "the TV and radio may be able to temporarily camouflage me being a jerk but eventually it is going to shine through. Unfortunately you are wrong man. I'm who I am today by choice. It has absolutely nothing to do with having a TV or radio. Man I wish it was that simple." My motivation for sharing this with readers is that I find so many people (from the outside world) who are so uniformly dismissive of the possibility that real change for the better can occur in a prison setting. I never hear anyone talk about the guys that really DO change.

The verbiage is always so jaded and cynical when it comes to this subject. I feel like I need to challenge that belief a little. Especially when you consider I am living proof of what can truly happen in here. Even while living in utter chaos and not really knowing where I was headed in this effort. Some guys do change for the better — just something for you to consider from now on. We all aren't incorrigible. Some of us do truly care about those we've harmed by our actions. Some of us have also taken it upon ourselves to better ourselves so that no one else is ever hurt as a result of our actions. Thank you for your time and I hope I've added something to the discussion/debate about prisoner rehabilitation/prisoner self-improvement. God Bless.

KENNETH EVANS

Drug addiction and alcoholism plague so many of our communities that a lot of us have become addicted to that way of life. And whether it's a little bit of weed, lines of coke, or shallows of alcohol, it's still addictive to most of us who've had to grow up without the average luxuries of life. This next writer, who's writing from a federal correctional institution in Cumberland, Maryland, is going up for parole next month so he wants us to pray for him (those of us who believe in a higher power) and wish him luck. He writes about the negative influences of mainly alcohol, but drugs also. You won't want to miss reading this piece, it really is a great one. We hope to hear more from him soon.

Broken Bottles, Vanished Dreams?

A drink of liquor a piece served at one time to each person in a group is called a round, fermenting molasses, distilling coloring with aged caramels my favorite, pursuing unrelentingly the rum-hound.

Surely I know the plans I have for you, says the Lord, plans for your welfare and not for harm, to vie you a future with hope, thus creating and expanding chain reaction of liberation with patients welded together by bonds of common suffering, ceasing to use dope. You can't pretend anymore that it was any good at the end or that it'll even be good again, nobody learns Russian in one day, recover one day at a time, accomplish what you're currently in. Humility — the quality or state of being humble in spirit; freedom from pride or arrogance. Without? It takes its toll, I came here to save my own ass and then I found out it was attached to my resilient soul.

Pill addicted Betty Ford could not face alcoholism because that meant she had done it to herself, there's nothing so bad that can happen to me that a drink won't make worse, devils works are subliminal stealth. "Act For us, but don't boss us" and render unto God the things that are God's. Even though I've been through hell and high water, God deposited the Holy Spirit into my body, research as we live in 1 of 8 pods. Alcohol is one of mankind's most seductive friends and most intractable enemies, god come to most men gradually, but his impact on me was sudden and profound I gave praise on my knees. Hope is a desire accompanied with expectation of obtaining what is desired or belief it is obtainable, lord jump start it, it shall commence, faith is a firm or unquestioning belief in something an assurance, promise or pledge of fidelity, loyalty or performance. Surrender by yielding to the power, control, authority or possession of God, give up completely, a loyal friend will root, God said he will open the windows of Heaven and pull you out a blessing, chosen you will bud and blossom and bring much fruit, Dear God I still got the shakes, teach me how to avoid the temptations that led me to drink in the first place, we came to believe that a power greater than our self could restore us to sanity. And I'm a lunatic such is the case.

Unburden yourself of the thoughts and guilts you had been able to confess to no one else, but with god there's no risk, all that's in the world is the lust of the flesh, lust of the eye and the pride of life. Yet in standing in the hedge of righteousness. Spiritually is how I deal with problems, pain and difficulties in my life and I don't have to escape it, the name of our illness is obsession. Love yourself for who you are not for who you wish you were, I have to admit. Come let us adore him, Christ the Lord, for he alone is worthy, Christ the Lord, real deliverance is when you take control of the thing that controls you, live in one accord. I was not present for most of my life, I'm finally participating in my own life. For many years I wanted drugs and booze to take me somewhere but I never got there, the way to arrest the disease or chemical dependency for good is to reconstruct your life and continue to grow with greater velocity until your death. My orchestrated heart is so rare.

I know it's hard being the mother of an addict . . .
When you hold me in your arms,
you see more than shackles and filthy habits . . .
I chase the dragon . . .
You pray for magic . . .
Asking the Lord every night to save me from an early casket!

read the rest of Alibi's BWO piece on page 49